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Roundup of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto (1943)

AND THE WORLD WHO SAID NOTHING

Peter

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THE LIFE STORY OF HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR PETER L. FISCHL

AND THE WORLD WHO SAID NOTHING

Editor: Judy Luehm Junecko

and

Mark Uszler

**The Life Story of Holocaust Survivor Peter L. Fischl
As Told to Bud W. Yoho**

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IN THIS BOOK
THERE ARE THOSE
THINGS I REMEMBER
BECAUSE THEY
MATTERED TO ME.

PETER

**Where are you,
Tibor Fischl?**



Peter Fischl on Bicycle in Budapest, Hungary, in the 1940's. The little Polish girl in the picture was hiding with her brother in Budapest for a short time.

The Poet That Told

To the poet that told
The World
What they said nothing to

To the poet that told
How awful it was
For he had true
Experience,
Which the world did
Not believe

Now the world should
Show their gratitude
To the poet that told
The world
What they said nothing to

So this poem I send
To you
Telling you we know
What the world said
Nothing to

Thank you,
Peter L. Fischl
For educating us
What we said
Nothing to

To the poet that told
The world
What they said
Nothing to

By: Samantha
January 22, 2001

Nordonia Hills Middle School, Northfield, Ohio, Teacher: Virginia L. Huml
Student and teacher received Little Polish Boy Award January 31, 2003

*Dedicated to Tibor Fischl, my father,
that he might not have perished in vain.*

**“AS I GRIPPED THE TELEPHONE, I COULD
HEAR THE NAZIS SCREAMING AND YELLING,
TAKING OVER THE AMBULANCE STATION
WHERE MY FATHER WAS HIDING. FATHER
TOLD ME HE DIDN’T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING
TO HAPPEN TO HIM. I WAS SPEECHLESS.
I HEARD GUNSHOTS, AND MY HEART FROZE.”**

**“THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS . . .
I WANT TO HELP PEOPLE TO START TO THINK
AND TO EDUCATE THEMSELVES
AND TO LOVE EACH OTHER,
SO NO ONE EVER HAS TO GO THROUGH
WHAT THAT LITTLE POLISH BOY
WENT THROUGH AGAIN.”**

**-- Peter L. Fischl
Holocaust Survivor**

PROLOGUE

On October 22, 1998, Peter Fischl received a letter from the Vatican which stated in part:
“His Holiness wishes you to know that he appreciates the sentiment which prompted you to share your poem with him. He invokes upon you abundant divine blessings.

Sincerely yours,

Monsignor Pedor Lopez Quintana

Assessor”

This book was written for people who like Peter Fischl’s world-famous poem, “To The Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up,” and want a deeper understanding of its meaning and the man who wrote it.

And the World Who Said Nothing traces Peter’s inspirational journey in his own words – from slavery under Nazism and Communism to freedom in America and the creation of his work.

Today, his poem hangs as a monument to the Holocaust in museums, public buildings and homes around the world. Most important, it is being taught worldwide in schools together with a lesson plan, becoming an “instrument of peace and healing” for our violent society.

And the World Who Said Nothing is the story of a child of the Holocaust whose love for fellow man, intolerance of injustice and “never give up” philosophy can serve as an inspiration to all. I am proud to call him my friend. I thank him for the interviews that resulted in this book.

BUD W. YOHO

Chapter 1 – THE LITTLE HUNGARIAN BOY

“I WAS LIKE THAT LITTLE CALF RUNNING IN THE PEN, NOT GIVING UP, NEVER GIVING UP.”

The love I was surrounded with as a child made me who I am today. As a young boy growing up in Hungary with my parents, Tibor and Edith (nee Neubauer) Fischl, and sister, Marika, I had a happy childhood. We lived in the city of Budapest. Mother was beautiful and played the guitar. She also had a most generous heart. Often when guests would come over and admire some particular object, such as a vase, oftentimes, they would go home with it. I guess you could call my sister and I pampered since we always had nannies, chauffeurs, maids and a cook.

My father was a child from a well-to-do business family from Pomaz, a small town not far from Budapest, the capital of Hungary. My family were farmers and wholesalers, selling animals and farm-related materials. Part of their business involved working with other farmers and bringing animals up to Budapest. Eventually, my father moved to Budapest where they developed the business into an enormous success.

If I learned generosity from my mother, then I likewise learned honesty from my father. Often I watched him consummate business deals worth many thousands with just a handshake. I learned at a young age that a man's word was his bond.

Yet even before the Nazis shattered our lives, I was no stranger to prejudice. In 1934 when I was only four years old, one of my most vivid memories was of an incident of violence that happened at the local swimming pool.

A young man about 18 was sunbathing at the pool when suddenly a pair of muscular youths grabbed him and tried to throw him into the pool. I felt outraged at what I saw. As he

fought their attempts, I tried to help him despite my size. I believe I actually kicked and pulled the hair of these two bullies while screaming as loud as I was able. Amazingly, I stopped their attack. I was perhaps too young to realize that it was just a practical joke, not a serious thing. It was the first time in my life I started fighting injustice. Maybe it was because I was so young and impressionable, but the incident left an indelible image on me.

Even then I felt outrage when I witnessed injustice. About people pushing other people around, I would not tolerate it – even when I was four years old. I have never forgotten it. To this day, I will fight against injustice anywhere and anytime.

Another unforgettable incident happened when I was eight. My father took me on a business trip with him to the offices of the Budapest slaughterhouse. I heard the screams of the animals as they were led to their deaths. I wandered through an open door, straight into the slaughterhouse area. I leaned against the fence, watching transfixed as the animals were killed. Butchers gave each animal an electric shot in the ear, and when the animal fell on its side, the butchers moved in with huge knives and saws, cutting the animal in half. Then they cleaned out the innards and hung the halves on hooks. I stood in horrified disbelief as butchers slopped around in the animals' blood going from one to the next with machine-like precision.

The last animal alive was a small calf that fought valiantly for his life. The first two butchers chased the spirited calf but slipped and fell into the pool of blood on the floor as the animal bolted for freedom. Other butchers joined forces, becoming splattered with blood as the calf dashed and circled, trying to escape.

“Bravo . . . bravo!” I yelled.

For a second that calf's eyes seemed to meet mine as if saying, “I've done my best my friend. Farewell!”

I watched in horror as seven butchers descended on the defenseless calf, finishing him in seconds. I leaned on the fence crying. The area was empty now. At the time, I never suspected that my family and myself would stand in the middle of our own “arena of death” in a few short years.

* * * * *

A few months after that incident in the slaughterhouse, our whole family went on vacation to St. Andrew (Szentendre) which is not far north of Budapest next to the Danube. We were having a nice vacation when one day I asked my father to rent a boat so I could go out on the river.

I hatched the idea that I would like to row upstream about three miles toward Vienna. A few miles further north of there is a city called Vac. It's a beautiful place with some old castles dating back to the 14th Century. I thought it would be an interesting and fun place to visit. I asked everybody in my family to join me but nobody wanted to go. So I said, “Well, I'm just going to go by myself.”

The boat I had wasn't really a row boat, rather a craft more suited to fishing, so it wasn't easy to row. I sat down in it, untied the boat and started rowing upstream toward Vac.

Naturally, the first 15 minutes weren't so hard, but, after that, every stroke became harder and harder. I began sweating. Clenching my teeth, I told myself not to give up. I focused every bit of my concentration on my goal. I counted to myself, one-two, one-two. It now was a contest of how much pain I could endure before giving up. I was like that little calf running in the pen, not giving up. Never giving up.

Sweat blinded me and stung my eyes. Still, I kept rowing and told myself I didn't care how much pain I had to endure. I wanted to see Vac, and nothing would stop me.

I was nearing total exhaustion when I looked up. There it was. The city of Vac! I had made it. I just sat in the boat, a smile across my face and began to laugh when I realized I didn't have to row anymore.

This incident started me on the belief that if you have a problem and want to solve it, you can. It forged in my heart the strong will to accomplish anything I set out to do. As a matter of fact, if someone tells me that a solution to a problem is impossible, I already want to work on it. The big payoff is the reward in solving the "impossible."

Never think of failing, because you fail when you give up. Many people never start, out of fear of failure. You should never be afraid of failure! If something doesn't work, you can make changes so it will. As long as you're ready to correct your mistakes, you have not failed.

For some reason, I always liked challenges or problems to solve. As a young man, I played cards with two friends of mine while at the same time had a chess game going with another. Tackling problems gets my adrenaline running, a great reward for me, and that, in turn, gives me the strength to solve it.

Little was I to guess that this "never give up attitude" would prove critical to my survival in later years.



Peter, 1 ½ years old, and his sister, Marika, 4 years old,
in a hotel room on a family vacation



Peter, 3 years old, with his dad



Peter, 3 ½ years old



Peter, 5 years old, with his mother

Chapter 2 – THE GATHERING STORM

“I DON’T WANT ANY NAZI DOCTOR EXAMINING ME.

I WOULD RATHER DIE THAN HAVE A NAZI HELP ME.”

In the summer of 1938, my father, mother, sister, and I went to Lugano, Switzerland, for vacation. Although I didn’t realize it then, I think my father probably was making plans about not returning to Hungary, due to the growing Nazi threat. The Nazis were becoming powerful, with a strong grip on Hungary influencing its Congress and laws. Jews no longer had the same privileges as the rest of the population; for instance, Jews could not hold civic jobs, obtain club memberships, or attend college. They had to use separate restrooms. Segregationist policies were similar to the pre-1960s American South.

But, for a young boy on vacation, those problems were far away. Lugano was beautiful. We stayed at the posh Hotel Victoria where we were amazed that the hired help always ate before we did. The management explained that, number one, they didn’t want the hired help to think they might be eating leftovers. Secondly, they didn’t want the hired help to serve food and be hungry while doing it.

After eating, we went to the gift shop where I saw a flashlight which was specially manufactured for wartime conditions. It had colored filters which minimized the chance of being seen by aircraft flying overhead. My dad bought me this flashlight, and we returned to our room.

Excited by my new toy, I immediately began playing with it. I stepped out on the balcony and began pushing the button like I was giving Morse Code signals, changing the light from red to blue. I was still playing with it five or ten minutes later when, suddenly, there came a hard knock on the door. The door opened, and to my surprise, several people came into our

room. It was the Swiss Secret Service. They thought we were some kind of secret agents giving signals to our spies somewhere in the city. Everybody laughed when they realized it was only me playing with my new toy. I didn't use that flashlight anymore. Now it is the only thing which I still have in my possession from my childhood.

The next day we went out on Lake Lugano. I asked my mother to rent a water bike for me so I could go out on the water. She did, and I climbed on the bike and started pedaling out onto the lake. I only pedaled out a few yards when, suddenly, people started screaming from the shore, "Peter! Peter! Come back! There's a big spider crawling up on your back!"

I became very frightened and froze, not knowing if I should jump off the bike and try to swim back or what. Then I felt something move on my back. I didn't dare look over my shoulder.

"Don't be frightened. Just come!" people yelled as they waved from the shore.

One Swiss onlooker immediately tore off his coat and told my mother, "Don't worry. If anything happens, I will jump in and help Peter." Of course, that man had no way of knowing I could swim. But at least he had the decency to offer help to a child in trouble.

Churning back to shore, I could no longer feel the spider. Had it moved up my back to my neck or maybe to the back of my head? Would it be on my face in an instant? I fought back those fears and just pedaled. Finally there, the people yanked the spider off my back. It was a gigantic water spider. Thank God I never turned back to see it.

I later learned that one reason my father took us to Switzerland that summer was to deposit large sums of money in secret numbered accounts. He wanted to tell us the secret numbers, but we told him we didn't want to think about it. We told him that should he die we wouldn't want to live. Years later, the Swiss destroyed my father's claim, as well as that of many other Holocaust victims, in what became a highly publicized international scandal.

After Switzerland, we continued our summer tour in Italy. Father bought tickets for the ship, Puccini, named after the famous composer. The small Italian ship was more of a freighter than a passenger ship. It had extra cabins which they sold to tourists.

About 50 percent of the people on the ship were German. When the ship stopped at one of the Italian harbors, most of the German passengers went swimming in the water around the ship. I told myself that if they can do it, so can I. So I jumped into the cold water.

The next day I woke up with a burning fever – scarlet fever that was triggered by the cold water. My father searched the ship for a doctor. The only doctor aboard was a German man. He knocked on my door, and I told him to come in. Immediately, I saw a Nazi emblem on his coat. He seemed nice and friendly, but I already heard of the horrible things the Nazis had done in Austria, as well as witnessed firsthand what was happening in Hungary.

As I looked up at him from my bed, I said, “I don’t want any Nazi doctor examining me. I would rather die than have a Nazi help me.” I asked him to leave. The doctor didn’t respond to my statement, not even one word. He turned around slowly and left the cabin.

A few short minutes later, somebody knocked on my door. The German doctor had returned; however, he was not wearing his Nazi emblem. He turned to me and said, “Peter, the reason I am a member of the Nazi party and wearing the Nazi emblem is because I was asked in Germany to become a member. If I refused, there would have been some very horrible consequences to me and, most likely, to my family. That is why I was wearing the Nazi emblem. I’m sorry if it gave you a bad feeling.” He sat on the bed, and I put my hand in his hand. He treated me, and we became friends. I can’t remember his name. If I could, I’d contact his family as an adult and tell them how much his visit meant to me.



Peter with his sister, Marika,
in 1938 at Lake Lugano,
Switzerland

Right: Jan Kadar,
Peter's tutor.
Picture taken on
the balcony of
Peter's home

As a director, he
won an Oscar
for best foreign
film, *The Shop
on Main Street*
(1965)

The movie is
available on
videotape at
SendMe
Movies.com, Inc.
1-800-320-8650
1-818-766-1224



Chapter 3 – SCHOOL DAYS

**“WHENEVER I ENCOUNTER A DIFFICULT SITUATION,
I CAN STILL HEAR JAN KADAR URGING ME ON TO VICTORY.
JAN BECAME AN OSCAR-WINNING DIRECTOR.”**

After that summer vacation in Lugano, we returned to Budapest. Mother was getting homesick, and Chamberlain's peace initiatives seemed to gain ground. Father wasn't as worried as before. His business commitments also needed attention after his long absence. Discrimination against Jews in Hungary was still mild. Two factors played into it. First, Hungary was an ally of Germany, so far. Also, the Jewish population was only about five percent of the country's total population.

For my sister and me, life returned to normal. Marika was going to a school named Baar Madas, a school in Buda which is a very high-class preparatory school. Marika had developed into womanhood at an early age and was already enjoying a lot of attention from boys. In the same school, I had a cousin, Vera Bruck, who was a few years older. She was a classmate of Hanna Szenes, the daughter of famous Hungarian writer, Bela Szenes. I saw Hanna doing her dancing and fell in love with her as a little boy.

After graduating and with the political climate deteriorating, Hanna wanted to go to Palestine. Hanna knew my sister through my cousin and came one day to us for help. We arranged for financial assistance so Hanna could leave the country. I don't know the details, but our family definitely was involved in her escape. She even sent one of her father's books back to us with some notes thanking us for our help.

Later on during the war, Hanna would return to Hungary, parachuting back for the British Intelligence. Unfortunately, she was captured immediately and tortured daily till the end of the war. Unable to be broken by her Nazi captors, she was executed just as the Russians were coming into Budapest. Today, Hanna is a war hero in Israel and in my heart.

While my sister was a good student, I was not. Over the next two years, I exasperated my teachers, my highly successful father and myself. That was before I met Jan Kadar.

I can tell you that Jan Kadar had a great effect on my life. I wish I knew how my father found Jan, but I don't really know. My father hired Jan to be my tutor. I met Jan in 1940 when he started coming to our house to help me with my studies. Come to think of it, my father always had great connections at all levels. For instance, Professor Szent-Gyorgyi, the Nobel Prize winning scientist who discovered Vitamin C, went to high school with my father and was a regular visitor at our house. So, I'm pretty sure that's how he found Jan who must have been an exceptional student in one of the colleges in Hungary.

Jan came to our house every day instructing me on the methods of study, learning and how to be an achiever. Jan was about 20 years old when I met him. I was about ten. His methods of teaching helped me, and, as we worked together, my studies became better and better. We also became good friends.

Jan had this dream he shared with me. He wanted to make and produce movies. He bought himself an 8mm movie camera, and often, after we finished our lessons, we would talk about the movies he was shooting and the enjoyment he got from it.

One of Jan's most remarkable achievements with me happened when I told him of an approaching ski competition organized by my school. Actually, it was a ski running event. I was no sports fan or a good skier. That only made Jan more determined.

Jan said, "You have to enter that, and you're going to do well in it. I guarantee it."

He started coming out on the hills with me where he would train me as if I were some young Olympic hopeful. He would put on his ski boots, I would put on my skis, and he would run next to me just in his ski boots, encouraging me to run and not to stop. There were days I was so sore that I could barely crawl out of bed. Yet Jan would never let me think negatively or make excuses.

Then the big day came. There I was in my skis ready for my debut with Jan standing next to me. He held a closed umbrella in his hand and had a confident look on his face. My stomach was in knots, but I wouldn't let on to anybody, least of all Jan.

The starting signal sounded, and we started running. Jan in his ski boots ran next to me. He was running, yelling and waving his umbrella.

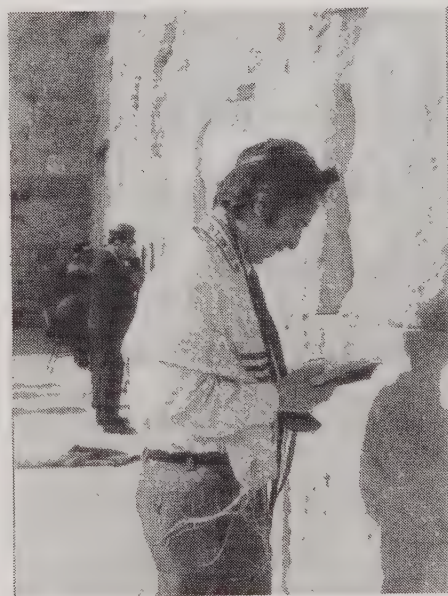
“Peter, go! Go, Peter, go!”

His exhortations and the thought that I could never let Jan down spurred me on. My adrenaline rushed and my lungs were burning. If not for all that, I might have stopped in the middle of the race.

Suddenly, a miracle happened, the race was over, and I had finished second! Jan was hugging me, lifting me up. It was like I had won a silver medal at the Olympics. Whenever I encounter a difficult situation, it's almost as if I can still hear Jan urging me on to victory.



Jan Kadar
in Israel



Chapter 4 – FACES OF WAR

**“I FELT BORED AND WENT TO A MOVIE.
I NEVER COULD HAVE IMAGINED HOW THIS SIMPLE ACT
WOULD SAVE MY MOTHER’S AND SISTER’S LIVES.”**

By 1944, it was obvious that Germany was going to lose the war. Hungarian Prime Minister Miklos Kallay tried to secretly negotiate with the Western Powers, but the Germans became aware of the negotiations. On March 19, 1944, Germany installed a collaborationist government and began an occupation under which most of Hungary’s Jewish population was deported and butchered. I know. I was there.

When the Germans occupied us on March 19, 1944, the anti-Jewish laws became stronger. I still remember the day of the occupation. It was a Sunday. I came home and went to my father and looked him in the eyes asking him the question that burned inside.

“Now that the Germans are here, is it possible that we are all going to be executed?”

He looked at me and with no hesitation said, “Yes.”

The first thing the Germans did was to allow each Jewish family one room each. The second thing they did was to make every Jewish person, in certain neighborhoods, move into large houses called Jewish houses. They put a big Star of David on each house, like they were houses of shame. This made us feel branded.

The people who were removed from the houses that became Jewish houses received the elegant Jewish apartments.

While we were at the Jewish house, two people became our guardian angels. One was Erzsebet Agoston. She started working as a maid for us at age 18 and was very close to our family. The other was Janos Gaal, a very successful Christian businessperson with his own shoe

factory. He had 60 employees and made wonderful shoes. He refused to leave the building and stayed in his original apartment in the Jewish house, even though he could have moved into any of the fancy apartments. If nothing else, just his presence was a relief to the people in that building. We felt if the Germans would come, his presence might have some effect on them.

His son became one of my friends – George Gaal. Janos and his family did unbelievable things for us. When the Nazis restricted the hours that we could shop, he went out and did the shopping for everybody in the Jewish house. Today, most of his family members are dead. The only living family member is George's sister, Eva, who still lives in Budapest.

On October 15th, the ARROW-CROSS (Nyilaskereszt) Hungarian Nazis took over our government and arrested Governor Horthy. This came as no surprise since only hours earlier Horthy gave a radio broadcast declaring that the Germans were not the allies of the government anymore. War was senseless. Hungary was pulling out.

Hearing of the ARROW-CROSS takeover, we fled the Jewish house to stay with our maid, Erzsebet Agoston, in the apartment where she worked. Our entire family was there, all my uncles, maybe 20 of us, crammed into one apartment. Erzsebet also hid many of our belongings at considerable risk to her own life. If the Germans had found out, she would have been shot along with us. However, we couldn't stay with her more than a couple of days since the apartment was near government buildings where a lot of official activity was conducted.

One morning, I looked out the apartment's balcony and saw the Hungarian Nazi Police Force (the Csensors) herding hundreds of Jewish people. Later we found out that they took these people to the Danube River and shot them in the head.

Unable to stay, I found refuge in a Catholic school with about 60 other Jewish children.

One day at the school I was feeling terribly bored, so I decided to go to the movie house. I had to sneak out of school since we weren't supposed to leave. I walked three or four miles to

the block of the theatre, but there was no theatre left. The movie house was leveled! The allied bombing had scored a direct hit. Stunned by what I saw, I paced aimlessly. How could this be?

Suddenly, I heard a voice calling, "Peter, Peter, what on earth are you doing here?" It was Alex Vida, a friend whom we met in the Jewish house. He now worked for the underground. Immediately, Alex asked where my mother and sister were. I didn't dare tell him they were hiding under their own name in a convent. So I asked him for his address and promised I would write them a letter, and they would contact him soon.

My father was hiding under his own name at the main Budapest ambulance station, Marko-utca, working as an ambulance car driver. Several Jewish medical doctors did the same, namely, working at the ambulance station under their own names. The advantage for all of them was that they wore paramedic uniforms; thus, they did not have to wear the compulsory yellow star on their clothing. A number of Jews were hiding there like that, maybe 15 in all.

Many of our friends were already deported. Earlier, I had lost touch with Jan Kadar, having heard he was taken away to a forced labor camp. Another friend of my father who was victimized by the Hungarian Nazi takeover was Attila Petchauer, an Olympic gold-medal fencing champion. Famous the world over, he was a newspaperman who wrote anti-Fascist articles in the newspaper. My father had taken me to visit him during the early days of the occupation, and I remember him as a funny person who loved to joke.

Even when the German's high-ranking officers called him in and asked him to stop writing, he refused. One time he even kicked a Hungarian Fascist into a printing press when the man tried to harass him. Attila felt that nobody could touch him.

One day Attila was drafted to a forced labor camp. He left his house in summer shoes and light clothing because he felt the Olympic gold medals in fencing would save him from the

camp. The Hungarian Fascists made him a forced laborer. The food and circumstances were horrible.

As luck would have it, some German troops came by, and a high-ranking German officer saw Attila. He said, "Attila, for heaven's sake, what are you doing here?"

This German officer was also a fencing champion for Germany and remembered Attila very well from the old days where he had befriended him. So every morning, they sent Attila to the German camp where he would train with the Germans, teaching them how to fence. It looked like he might survive because he was a fencing celebrity.

The Hungarian Nazis were extremely angry when they discovered what happened and saw what fantastic condition Attila was in. After the German troops moved on, the Hungarian Fascists played their card. They stripped Attila of his clothes, chained him between two trees in the freezing cold weather, poured cold water on him and then beat him to death with chains. I remember listening to a Russian radio broadcast when they reported the finding of Attila's body.

On November 27, 1944, I was at the Catholic school when I was called to the phone. My father was on the line. He told me that the Nazis were there and that they were making preparations to take them away. I was in a state of total shock.

As I gripped the telephone, I could hear the Germans screaming and yelling, taking over the ambulance station where my father was hiding. Father told me he didn't know what was going to happen to him. I was speechless. I heard gunshots, and my heart froze.

I didn't know what to say. It was so unreal, so unworldly. I could hardly comprehend it all. For the rest of my life, I'm still sorry that I didn't think of some encouraging words to say to my father. He said goodbye, and then he was gone. The experience was so overwhelming I was never able to talk about it until writing this book. Not even to my mother or sister.

To the best of my knowledge, my father went to the death camp in Austria called Mauthausen. As far as what happened, I have never found out. There were no witnesses or stories about what might have happened to him. Did my father die? I have no proof that he died. But he never came home, so he must have died. I just don't know the circumstances.

At the convent, my sister, Marika, received my letter and contacted Alex Vida. He went up to the convent where they were hiding. Alex heard that the Hungarian Nazis were planning to raid the place. He warned my mother and sister to leave, but the others argued it was all nonsense – the convent was safe. After much pleading, Alex convinced my mother and sister to follow him. It was lucky they did because the place was raided shortly afterward. All the Jewish refugees were shot into the Danube on Christmas Eve.

Alex relocated my mother and sister to an apartment in a building next to where streetcars, loaded with ammunition, were parked. The apartment belonged to a Hungarian officer who was at the front. It was a nice place, not a safe haven, perhaps, but they had no other place to hide. Not long afterward, I could no longer stay at the Catholic school because things were getting too dangerous, so Alex hid me in his apartment. His Jewish mother had false papers as a cleaning lady, and she would come to his apartment occasionally to clean it. One day, the landlady came to the apartment and discovered me. Later on when Alex's mother came to clean, the landlady told her, "I have suspicions that Vida is hiding Jews in his apartment."

Alex's mother came in and told us that I'd better leave immediately. Ever since that discovery by the landlady, I've been troubled by anxiety attacks. At times I've been so paranoid that when I sleep, I have fear from every noise and every step outside my apartment that the Nazis are coming. I'm certain that these anxiety attacks ultimately led to my heart attacks in later life.

Through his underground connections, Alex found a place for me to stay inside a bakery. Even though it was snowing outside, the bakery was warm, and everything smelled heavenly. The bakery was occupied mostly with young people in their early twenties who were escapees from forced labor or death camps.

I was the youngest teenager there. Everyone was very kind to me, bringing me bread and trying to make me feel at home. However, the Americans and Russians were closing in. That often meant that the bombs were falling nearby. When they exploded, it felt like a huge earthquake at times. We prayed the bombs wouldn't fall on us.

One evening, a group of people told their stories about being taken in a boxcar to a death camp. They mentioned that they took a one-week trip without food or water and were unable to use the toilet. The smell was horrible in the boxcar. Upon arrival at the death camp, the Nazis opened the door and said to these people, "Who wants some food and water?" Naturally, everybody was terribly hungry and thirsty. Since it was a small opening, only a few people could struggle out of the boxcar. The Nazis told the people to step forward. They did, and, immediately, the Nazis shot them to death. After that, they looked at the remaining people inside the boxcar and said, "Does anybody else want water and food?" That gives you some idea how sadistic and sick these people were.

Similar stories like this were told all night long recounting Nazi brutalities.

Later that evening, the bombs fell closer. Pieces of the ceiling started falling, and the entire building shuddered like it might collapse. I'll never forget what happened next. Almost all the people in the room shielded me with their bodies. They would have been the first to die by sacrificing themselves. It's hard to express my feelings about their selfless courage.

During the time I was at the bakery, my mother and sister were still in the apartment by the Danube which Alex Vida had found. When I left the bakery, I joined my sister and mother

there. I quickly noticed that the streetcars running in front of our building were being used by the Nazis to transport ammunition and explosives from one side of the town to the other. It made a very dangerous situation with allied bombs falling into the river like raindrops – by the thousands. If the bombs hit the streetcars next to the building, the entire building and most of the block would be gone. The German soldiers had already detonated and blew most of the bridges because the Russians were advancing.

One day, my sister left our hiding place. She walked out onto the street where a large group of Jewish people was being herded in long lines by Hungarian Nazis. These were only 16- or 17-year-old soldiers, gang members if you will, taking these people. She inquired of one of the Hungarian Nazis and learned that they were moving these people to the ghetto, to the Pest side.

An older woman was telling the Hungarian Nazi, “I’m so tired.” He looked at her and pointed to a bench. “Go sit down.” As she headed toward the bench, the Nazi took his weapon and shot the woman in the back. My sister hurried back and told me what had happened. I rushed out into the street. There was nobody there. Just a body lying in the blood-spattered snow. I ran to her side. When I looked into this woman’s face, her eyes were open. Something chilled me. A bit of a surprised look had crept into her eyes. The last thing she felt.

The front grew nearer to our apartment by the hour. Our landlady said we had to leave because she couldn’t take the pressure any longer. So we left the Buda side of the city. It took us about a day to find a new place on the Pest side. Later, we got the news that there had been a big explosion near our former residence. We learned that a bomb had hit the 30 streetcars loaded with ammunition parked in front of the building, and the entire block had blown away!

With the Russians and Americans closing in, Budapest became the eye of the storm. Not only were we hiding from the Germans, but now the dangers from allied bombing raids also

picked up. At one place in the city, the Russians had moved in. At the other end, the Germans still held on. Whenever the Germans were spotted, scores of allied aircraft swooped down on them. Since they didn't know who we were, they just saw German soldiers in our area and started strafing us. Many times when I stood in line to get food, a few people in that line would get killed this way.

The end was near for the Nazis. One night as we waited in the basement of our building, one of the tenants of our building came in. He was a Hungarian soldier, out of uniform. He was a tall man with a smiling face and had a bottle in his hand. As he got drunk that night, he started singing "The Almond Tree Has Fallen" over and over again. He sang this song until exhausted, then fell asleep. It lightened the tension in our hiding spot since there were constant low-flying air raids and German armor dug in across the street.

Next morning, this man put on his uniform, got on his motorbike and left for the front. A few hours later, his friend came back and told us that this man suffered a direct hit from a shell that literally pulverized him into thin air. To me, this man epitomized the senseless idiotic tragedy of war. A man forced to do his job, like so many others, now gone.

Then it was over. The soldiers of the Soviet Army liberated us. The German soldiers were kicked out, and the fighting stopped. The Nazis were beaten. Soon, the madness started by a lunatic paperhanger whom the world failed to take seriously enough ended – at the horrendous cost of millions of lives.

We returned to our original apartment on the other side of town. The apartment had some gaping bomb holes but we could still live there. Naturally, I wondered if I would ever see my father again.

One day, two men who were broken-down soldiers coming back from Germany came to our apartment asking, "You are the son of Tibor Fischl?" I said, "Yes."

“Oh, we were laughing with Tibor. He is on his way home.”

We were so happy we gave them what money we had in our pockets. As it turned out, it was just a con game. These men would go from house to house looking at the mailboxes to see who had a Jewish name and asking if someone had been taken away.

As a result of this charade, I had dreams over the years that my father came home – that I ran to him and cried and was very happy. Then I would wake up and weep because it was only a dream. The next night, I’d have this dream again, and I would tell Daddy, “Last night I had a dream that you came home, and now you’re really here.” That was also a dream.

Haunted by nightmares of war, I nurtured a tremendous hatred for the Nazis that I ultimately expressed in my poem.

* * * * *

A lot of people don’t realize that during the Holocaust every nation and/or people responded differently.

When the Nazis ordered the Finns to let them deport Jews to death camps, the Finns declined, and not a single Jew was taken from Finland.

When the people of Denmark learned that deportations would begin soon by the Nazis to take the Jews to death camps, they started smuggling the Jews to neutral Sweden, and only 400 Jews were captured by the Nazis. The Danish people did not give up, and through the Red Cross had their people constantly checked in the death camps. Therefore, the Germans were afraid to hurt the Danish Jews. At the end of the war, an extremely small number of Jews had died of natural causes in concentration camps in Denmark. No one was tortured or murdered.

In Italy, the Italians sabotaged the Nazis and made it hard for them to deport the Italian Jews to the death camps.

In Hungary, President Horthy also sabotaged the Nazis, and the deportations started only at the end of the war from Budapest. On October 15, 1944, President Horthy bravely made a speech on a Hungarian radio station and told the Hungarian soldiers to put their weapons down because Hungary would not help the Germans any more.

At the end of the scale, the people in Poland hated the Jews even more – if that were possible – than the Nazis. The Russians were not very far behind them either.

Chapter 5 – ESCAPE TO AUSTRIA

“I WAS THE ONLY ONE WHO CARED ABOUT THEM. FOR SOME MYSTERIOUS REASON, I WAS REWARDED WITH FREEDOM FOR THAT.”

After we were liberated by the Soviet Army in January 1945, the war ended for us. We left our last hiding place and returned to our original apartment, my mother, my sister, and myself. My father never returned from the concentration camp Mauthausen. We were living on the third floor in a corner apartment. The room at the corner had two balconies. There was an enormous hole in the middle of it from either a bomb or a tank shell that went all the way down to our landlady's apartment, a wealthy lady who owned the building.

Slowly, we got our belongings together. Over the next year, our life in Budapest became more tolerable. At least no more bombs were falling on our heads. Because of the atrocities we experienced during the war, my mother, a war widow, was given a license by the government to operate a business. So my mother opened a small sandwich shop. We did very well, and I eagerly helped out a lot.

With the Communist occupation, food was becoming scarce in Budapest. Everybody had a deep distrust of the Russians. We heard there was food at the farms. If only we could find a way to get it into the city. I hit upon a solution.

I purchased a lot of vodka bottles and made packages: Vodka bottles and money. When I was ready to put my plan into action, I hired two large trucks and headed out to the farms. Whenever the Russian soldiers stopped us, I would jump out from the truck with vodka bottles in my left hand and money in my right hand. The Russians treated us like kings. They let us go in every instance in a matter of minutes.

Reaching the farms with the trucks, I loaded up and came back with tons of food to Budapest. When other people saw what a mere little boy did, they had no fear any more and copied me. Food started coming into the hungry capital.

Slowly, the Communist party took over. Then we had to apply and live by their ideologies. In a few weeks or months, the newly established Communist government took away what the Nazis did not. Most of our things, our movable effects, the Nazis stole from us, but now it was the Communists' turn. They took not just from us, but from the whole country, regardless of class or religion. People with factories, big businesses and large landholdings had everything taken away. This was called nationalization or public ownership. Janos Gaal, the shoe manufacturer I spoke of earlier, had his factory and business taken away as well. It was a disgrace, a pure power struggle to show us who was boss. While they were stealing from us, the Communists made sure that their leaders were living well. That's how I remember the early Socialistic experience.

I lived from 1945 to 1956 under Communist Socialism and made my living as a truck driver. I couldn't better myself by attending fine schools since I was considered a bourgeois whose businessman father was deported and killed by the Nazis. In short, I was an enemy of the state. I worked very long hours and made very little money as a truck driver.

Those were 11 bleak years. What kept me going were my thoughts. I entertained myself by writing short stories and making fun of those people. Of course, I couldn't publish stories then, but I wrote them to amuse myself and a few close friends. In my mind, I worked at several attempts to escape from Hungary, but it was very difficult. Security was especially tight at the Austrian border since it was a door to the Western world. There was an electric fence erected along the Austrian-Hungarian border. Before the fence, Austria had a quarter mile or so where

all trees were cut. At this point where everything was flat and open, there were mine fields and border patrols with dogs. Escape was nearly impossible.

In 1956, revolution broke out in Hungary from October 23rd until November 4th. The Hungarian Socialists were beaten in the first part of the revolution by the Hungarian young people and students. But the Russians came back and took over the government again. With things in turmoil, there came opportunity for escape.

During this time, some 5,000 people attempted to escape every day. My friends came to me asking what I thought about the prospect of escaping. I said, "It's an excellent idea. Why don't we do it?" Almost all of the transportation systems were shut down. It was almost impossible to get to the border. Since the Austrian border was about 150 miles from Budapest, it would be difficult to go on foot. So I worked up a plan with a co-worker friend from the truck station. Very early in the morning, we were to go to the station and "borrow the state's truck," then try to make the border.

The next morning we broke in and filled up the truck with diesel fuel. It was a fast truck capable of carrying 3 ½ tons. I told all my friends, everyone in the building, to get ready to leave. About 34 people got in the truck with me to have a run at freedom. I did it for free, too. No favors asked.

With the truck and a lot of luck, we were able to make the border. There were roadblocks along the way, and it was very cold. The cold became our ally as the soldiers at the roadblocks were freezing. They had fires going and were warming themselves. They weren't looking at the road. It was foggy, too, and we sped through at top speed. Luckily, they didn't shoot at us.

When we arrived at the border and drove the truck to a mountainside, we were trying to figure out how to get into Austria. None of us really knew how to enter. I was the person who knocked on doors asking people in their nightclothes for information. I even offered to pay

people, but no one took us over. They only cheated us out of our money and left. Finally, we got a lead on how to cross over the border and left.

When we reached the border, we had machine guns firing at us. The border guards screamed, "Put your hands up!" I had my 2½ year old son on my shoulder. I was holding his legs so I couldn't put my hands up. I told my son, "Tibor, put your hands up," and he did. It was very scary and frightening. They arrested us. When we walked back to the border station, they put us in a jail cell. During the next few hours, everybody was questioned. About 90 percent of the people they had arrested were people who were not resisting with weapons. They told us early next morning that since we had our children with us, we could go home. We had to return to Budapest. We were warned that if we were caught trying to escape to Austria again, they would deport us to Russia. Our names and photos were taken for their records.

All of us walked to the train station for the trip back. There were literally thousands of people in the same situation as us – dirty, tattered clothes, unshaven. They were all waiting for the train to Budapest so they could return home.

Then I noticed one couple who just walked out from their home. They looked like they could have been from outer space – a clean-shaven man, very well dressed, and his girlfriend sitting on a bench. I said to myself that these people must be out of their minds. I'm going to have a talk with them. I got up and walked over to them. I asked if it was okay to sit down. They said, "Certainly."

I said, "Look at us! Last night my child and my family were almost shot to death." I continued, "It looks to me like you're about to go to Austria to escape; there's no way you can do it."

The young man studied me carefully.

“Well . . . now, listen, that’s nice of you to say that, but I just came back from Austria to take my girlfriend with me. This is going to be my second time.”

“Oh, my God. How on earth can you do this?” I said.

“I know the right people,” he said. “By chance, I met two young school children who, even during the hardest Communist years, on weekends went through the border from Hungary to Austria to see movies at the theatre. They know the border very well.”

I asked him if there would be any possibility that maybe we could join him. At first, he didn’t want to go for it, but I talked and talked and finally convinced him to help us.

Later that day, we went with them and found the two kids who led us to the border. In 15 minutes or so, we were through and up to Austria. One of the most dramatic moments in my life was the last five minutes of our quest. We entered the so-called no-man’s land – there were no trees or plant life growing. We could see that every several hundred yards there were watchtowers, possibly manned with soldiers and machine guns looking down on the border. If they saw someone, undoubtedly they would shoot them. We held each other’s hands, making that final walk to the border, not knowing whether we were walking toward freedom or death. Then we realized that the towers were empty. We were free at last. We had left everything behind. The only thing I had in my pocket was a piece of bread and a very small amount of money.

Because I am an obsessed-type person, I don’t just do things. I don’t worry about things. I don’t worry about things going wrong; if something goes wrong, I will fix it. That’s how I felt about our escape. No matter how many times we were to be captured or put on a train to Russia, I knew that we would make it to freedom – or die trying.

Reflecting on what happened, there were probably 4,000-5,000 people waiting there at the station where we met the man and woman who helped us escape. Isn’t it interesting that I

was the only one who got up and started talking to them? In my mind, I felt that I should warn them to be careful so they wouldn't be killed. That's why I went up and talked to them and told them we had been shot at with machine guns at the border. To think that in this whole group of people, I was the only one who cared about them or anyone else. For some mysterious reason, I was rewarded with freedom for that.

One final thought. It was years later when I saw the picture of the Little Polish Boy with his hands up, just an innocent boy with German machine guns behind him, forcing his arms up, that my subconscious formed a picture. It was the picture of ourselves during our escape from Hungary with my little son, Tibor, who was forced to have his arms up. I'm certain this connection helped fuel the horrible anger I expressed in my poem.

Chapter 6 – A NEW HOME

“WHEN WE APPROACHED NEW YORK HARBOR, WE STARTED SEEING FREEWAYS FILLED WITH MILLIONS OF CARS COMING AND GOING.”

We slept near the Austrian/Hungarian border the first night. The next day we started making our plans. Most of the Hungarians were placed into large holding camps called Lagers. Since I knew some German, I was able to express myself to our hosts and tell them that, in Vienna, Austria, I had a very good friend. I had some money with me, so the Austrian border guards agreed to let us buy train tickets to Vienna.

Our train ride was a nice experience in a beautiful neutral country where people didn't live under dictatorship. As we rode through lush farmland and small towns with lovely landscapes, Austria seemed like heaven to us.

That evening when we arrived in Vienna in the main train station, the effect on us was as if we were entering the Tsar's palace for the first time. It was awesome, well lit, clean, and organized, with courteous people. Here we were in dirty clothes, tired, and I still carried Tibor on my shoulders. We walked through this magnificent station out onto the street where we saw some streetcars.

I remembered that my nanny, Anny Coufal, was from Vienna and that she lived on PiaristenGasse at 48. As I asked for more information, I found my German rapidly improving and was able to make myself understood. Everyone was sympathetic to the tragedy we endured in Hungary under the Communists. They told us how to get to PiaristenGasse 48 on the streetcar. And so we went.

We didn't have to pay any streetcar fare. The Austrians took it upon themselves to be courteous and make the sacrifice to help refugees out. They didn't take our money. That's how nice the people were.

When we arrived and traced down the address of Anny Coufal, nobody was there. It was scary and disappointing. Remember, in Europe people don't often move. They move into a building when they're little kids and often die there. It was highly unlikely that she had moved. I thought about it a bit, then went down onto the street walking up and down, debating what to do.

An Austrian police car drove by. I flagged it down and explained to the policeman that we had a nanny from Austria when we were little kids, how we loved each other, and, when Adolph Hitler took over, she had to go back because Hitler ordered every Austrian citizen to return to Austria.

We had helped her even after she returned and, for a while, were able to send her food and money. She was just like part of our family. I was telling this to the police who showed a great willingness to help.

Since we couldn't do anything there, they took us to the police station. We spoke with several investigators, telling them all we knew about "die Anny," what year she was in Hungary, and the rest. Suddenly, the policeman smiled and said, "We know where she is." The investigators realized I had made a common mistake. I had flip-flopped the number – the real address was 84, not 48!

The policeman said, "Let's have some fun with this." We waited outside Anny Coufal's door as the policeman knocked. "Who is it?" came a voice. "This is the police."

The door opened, and the police explained there was someone here to see her. I stepped forward and looked into her eyes. I was 26 years old. The last time she saw me I was seven.

Picture this. Anny looked at me and said, “Peter!” We jumped into each other’s arms. Imagine, she immediately recognized me after not seeing me for 20 years!

After a while, Anny told her story to the policeman about what my family had done to help her – how we helped her out during the Hitler regime. When we parted company, the police said they would put us in a place very close to Anny where Hungarian refugees were staying.

Most of these Lagers were big barracks with thousands of people staying in the same place. But the place they took us was more like a small country club with maybe no more than 30 or 40 people living there. We were treated well, with great food and hospitality. We were grateful that the police helped us in getting this place that enabled us to see Anny quite often.

While in Vienna I looked up the attorney of an Austrian who used to live in Hungary as well, Prince Koburg. My father had dealings with him. During the Nazi era, my mother and father went up to Prince Koburg’s palatial house. My father gave him \$100,000 in cash and told him that “when the war is over, if I don’t survive, then this money is to be given to my children.”

I arrived at the attorney’s office for my appointment. I went in still wearing my shabby but cleaned refugee clothing and started telling the attorney my story, that Prince Koburg was a friend of my father.

“Your father was Prince Koburg’s friend?” he snorted.

I said, “Yes. Yes.”

The man nearly laughed me out of his office. He said that Prince Koburg was on a trip and occasionally checked in with him. He said he would relay the message.

Naturally, I never got in touch with Prince Koburg. When I called his attorney, he said the Prince told him not one word of my story was true. Both the attorney and Prince Koburg turned out to be thieves. Yet there was nothing I could do about it.

Then my son Tibor became ill. I feared he might have scarlet fever. We had to put him in hospital quarantine where nuns took care of him. With his illness and the Prince Koburg turndown, our plans to leave Austria were set back a few months. Finally, we decided that we would try to go to America.

President Eisenhower told the American people that there would be no more immigration from Hungary. He gave 5,000 visas to 100,000 refugees, and they went quickly. We didn't make that quota. Then it was decided that due to the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and since hardly any Hungarians had immigrated since 1937, some 25,000 visas were being made available. We got on that quota.

When everything was arranged, they told us we could choose to fly to the United States or go by boat. I was always afraid of flying, so I chose the boat. We took a train across Germany from Austria to Bremerhaven, a very large German harbor. An American Navy carrier and transport ship called General Walker was there. That was the ship that brought us to America. It carried 5,000 Hungarian people over to the United States. The food was excellent on our nine-day trip. It was an enormous ship, and it handled the rough winter seas well. But had the trip taken just one more day, I think I would have been seasick.

When we landed in New York, I saw one of the most fantastic sights. I came from Hungary, an undeveloped country. In Budapest where there were about a million people living, maybe ten people had private automobiles. When we approached the harbor in New York, we started seeing the freeways from the water with millions of cars coming and going. We just couldn't imagine where these people were going to and coming from. As a matter of fact, I still don't know.

When we landed, everyone was nice to us. We took a bus to New Jersey to Camp Kilmer which was a former internment camp during WWII where German prisoners were taken. Camp

Kilmer was a nice place with enormous, well-built barracks and a big cafeteria. Everything was well organized. To start our lives again, we had to find some sponsors to help us start over and look for work. It took me a couple of months or so before I located a sponsor, back east in Pennsylvania.

While in camp, I met Paul Javor, a famous Hungarian actor. He was someone my father once knew. He was in camp working as a translator for free, helping the refugees. He spoke good German, English, Hungarian and some French.

Our lives in the New World began.

Chapter 7 – THE CABBIE

“ONE OF THE FIRST VIPS I MET AS A CABBIE WAS BARBRA STREISAND.”

The town where we relocated was Bradford, Pennsylvania, a small town of some 10,000 close to the New York state line just southeast of Erie, Pennsylvania. It was a very pleasant town in which to live and work. I got a job in a corrugated box factory where I assembled boxes and studied English at night.

Unfortunately, less than a year later, my wife decided she wanted a divorce. She left with Tibor, and I was alone. My sister, Marika, was going to the state college in San Jose, California, at the time. She thought it would be a good idea for me to stay with her until I got my life sorted out.

I took the Greyhound bus from Buffalo, New York, to San Francisco, California. In the next 3 ½ days, I saw the entire span of the United States from the window of a bus – quite an interesting way to experience the immense vastness of America for an immigrant. I must admit, though, the constant sitting was exasperating at times.

In San Jose, I got into blueprinting. I started as a driver and then learned the blueprinting process. At night, I continued my education studying some engineering and mathematics. For five years or so, I lived there and had a very good time. It was a fun college town, and the weather was fabulous.

One spring, my sister graduated from college, and we drove up to Lake Tahoe for the summer. I became a cab driver, and my sister took a job as a cocktail waitress. Although we were only planning on staying the summer, we ended up living there for about 18 months.

Driving a cab afforded me the opportunity to meet many interesting people, both famous and not so famous. One of the first VIPs I met as a cabbie was Barbra Streisand. This was about 1963 when she started her career as Liberace's opening act at Harrah's Club in Lake Tahoe. When she came on stage and started singing, she got standing ovations. People tore the place down. You just knew that she was going to be a superstar.

One night after the show, I drove Barbra to Bill Harrah's house. They called it Bill Harrah's house, but it was a mansion where many of the stars were staying. I said, "Miss Streisand, I listened to your singing with my mother (who was visiting us). You know how people feel about your singing. May I ask you how long did it take for people to discover you, once you started singing?" She said, "Immediately." She didn't look like she wanted to talk a lot.

Other stars were just the opposite. Alice Fay, along with their 18-year-old daughter, talked for a half hour or so and was one of the sweetest persons in this universe.

Frank Sinatra's wife, Nancy, also rode in my cab and was a very kind and interesting person to talk to. We were going to pick up her son, Frankie, Jr. We were talking about him because he was appearing across the street in the Wagon Wheel Club opposite Harrah's. We had a nice conversation. I told her how much I liked her son. She appreciated that but quickly added, "He has a lot to learn."

I also met Louie Prima. He had just gotten a divorce from Keely Smith who used to sing with him. He had a new young wife, probably 25 or 30 years younger than him who was pregnant and singing with him at the time. Both of them were very nice. Naturally, Louie Prima and Sam Butera played together. They were fantastic showmen and very entertaining.

I also met Harry James who was playing in the lounge. As a matter of fact, both Harry James' and Louie Prima's orchestras rotated in the lounge; one hour Louie Prima played, the next hour Harry James performed with his famous singer and saxophone player, Willie Smith.

I was amazed at the amount of alcohol these people drank. Not Louie Prima, but Harry James and Willie Smith. I thought they wouldn't be able to get up out of their chairs the next hour, but they got up and played like Masters.

Willie Smith became a friend of mine. One day, we were talking about Hungarian food. I invited him over and wanted to have my sister make us some food. Through some mix-up, I couldn't get hold of him. Next time I saw Willie, he teased me with, "Hey, what happened to my dinner?" I thought that with the amount of alcohol he consumed he would not remember his own name. These were amazing people.

I also had a chance to talk to Harry James. Sensational musician, genius, motion picture star, and former husband of Betty Grable, he nonetheless loved the ladies. Almost every night, he was with someone new. One night, I was taking him and his date up the hill to a very posh restaurant. I overheard him describing the restaurant to his date saying, "Wonderful place, great view, sensational food and noooo music." Like what a relief. I'll never forget it.

I also met the famous clown, Emmett Kelly. It just so happened that my nine-year-old son, Tibor, was coming to Lake Tahoe to spend time with me for his birthday. When I told Emmett Kelly my son was coming, he said, "Please let me know through the maitre d' when you're both in the showroom, and I'll take care of you."

He kept his word. The maitre d' gave us the best table in the house. I don't think that if I had been Howard Hughes I could have gotten a better table.

My son and I had this fantastic view. Emmett Kelly was on stage entertaining the crowd. Emmett Kelly also was a fast-sketch artist – in a matter of minutes he was able to paint portraits of anybody. He told me that in his younger years that's how he had made his living.

On stage, Kelly drew a 24-inch by 30-inch painting of himself. Then with the spotlight on him, he came to our table. Another spotlight followed an enormous birthday cake as it was carted toward us from the kitchen. Emmett Kelly then brought the portrait over to us, hand signing it – “Happy Birthday, Tibor.” He kissed my son, then went back on stage.

People around us gawked at us as if we were from outer space or the Vanderbilts or Rothschilds. Little could they suspect that I was only a cab driver, grateful to share a special birthday with my son.

One time, Shecky Green sat in my cab and asked me to take him out to the Harrah's house. I didn't know who he was, so I said, “Sorry, sir, I don't recognize you.” He pointed toward the sign across the street which read, “Shecky Green.” He said, “That's me.” I said, “Sorry, Mr. Green, I didn't know you. Please forgive my ignorance.”

We drove up to Harrah's house and Shecky said, “Peter, stay out here. In a few minutes, I'll come back.” Then he thought a few moments. “Peter, this is a big party. I'm not going to let you stay outside. Come in with me.” Since I was wearing a black tie and tuxedo as part of my taxi driver uniform, all I did was remove my yellow hat and follow him in.

So Shecky brings me into this huge party. Mitzi Gaynor is in the middle of the room, and Shecky takes me by the arm up to her. Mitzi is part Hungarian, and he said, “Mitzi, this gentleman is also from Hungary, and he works for Mr. Harrah.” He didn't tell her I was a cab driver. She was very sweet.

Just for kicks, Shecky started introducing me to everyone in the whole room! I was standing there with Shecky who was having a ball introducing me to everyone. He truly was one

funny and creative person. I went on to see dozens of his shows, and all were different. At the end, he would always say, "I don't know how to end this show." Yet he would always come up with a clever way to do it.

I met Georgie Jessel in my cab one day. He was warm and engaging and nicknamed the "Toastmaster General." He told me he was raising quite a bit of money for Israel. At the end of the fare, he gave me a silver dollar. I handed him the dollar back and told him to put it in the fund for Israel. He gave it back to me, and I gave it back to him. Before long, we were laughing and playing ping pong with this silver dollar in the taxicab.

I met many other people, including Woody Herman and also Jerry Cologna who was with Bob Hope in many of his pictures. I also enjoyed the shows of many, including Jack Benny, Jerry Lewis and Liberace.

Harrah's showroom was very attractive, too – big tables and lots of waiters – a different world from the crowds of Las Vegas nowadays. I earned good money and had sensational clothing, alligator shoes and a brand new Super Sport Chevy Impala. On my days off, I lived like a billionaire. Many times I'd drive down to Reno which is about 50 miles away and meet other interesting entertainers.

Bill Harrah, to my knowledge, was the first person to hire Stanford University to work out plans to better his business. He arranged for people who came by bus or plane from all over California to his club to be reimbursed for their fare. For example, if you lived in San Jose and bought a Greyhound ticket to Harrah's club, you were given back your entire bus fare upon your arrival.

He also had a list of high rollers from Los Angeles and other areas whom he would invite. As a courtesy, he would send private planes to pick them up. Mine was one of seven cabs Harrah owned to pick up these people from the airport. They had beautiful private hotel rooms

to stay in with every kind of food and drink imaginable, all for free. Of course, many of them lost \$50,000 to \$75,000 in a weekend, so it really wasn't so free after all. A lucky few of them even won – like the high roller who tipped me \$50 for a very short cab trip, my biggest tip ever.

Chapter 8 – A GHOST FROM THE PAST

“I PICKED UP *TIME MAGAZINE*, AND I SAW SOMETHING THAT SENT A CHILL THROUGH MY BODY.”

After my life as a cabbie in Lake Tahoe, I relocated to Los Angeles with my sister who later attended UCLA. It was 1966, and we both lived in Hollywood. One evening, I picked up *Time Magazine* and started reading the list of Academy Award nominations. Then I saw something that sent a chill through my body. Nominated for best foreign film was *The Shop on Main Street* directed by Jan Kadar.

I leaped up and said to my sister, “Marika, this is Jan!” She said, “You must be kidding.” She looked at the magazine with disbelief. After all, Jan had been taken to a labor camp by the Nazis and was probably dead.

“I would never kid about something like this!” I snatched the phone and immediately got the overseas operator to contact Prague. In about ten minutes, I had the number of Jan Kadar. My heart pounded while the phone rang on the other end.

When he answered, I recognized him immediately. My God, it was Jan! He was happy. We were so excited that we were jumping up and down. We made arrangements to meet when he came to Los Angeles for the Academy Awards.

A few weeks later, Jan arrived in town. I went to meet him at the Beverly Hills Hotel where he was staying. The lead actor and actress from *The Shop on Main Street* were with him. I was translating the *Los Angeles Times* in Hungarian to Jan. He in turn translated into Czech for his entourage. We were very happy because the review said great things about the movie.

The story itself is set among the turbulent days of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia. It concerns the relationship between a Jewish woman and the man who has been put in charge of her shop.

Czech actress, Ida Kaminska, played one of the lead roles. She was still very pretty back then in 1966. She didn't speak English, so I spoke with Jan in Hungarian, and he translated it for Ida. Ida was smiling, jumping up and down, and laughing for joy. She was one of the biggest actresses in Czechoslovakia and had a great stage reputation, too.

I had a feeling that Jan was going to win. I told him that he should make a speech about the Holocaust if he won. I worked out some ideas with him. When the big night came, I could barely breathe. *The Shop on Main Street* won! When he received his Oscar, Jan just said, "Thank you," and left. I asked him later, "Why didn't you say anything about the past?" He said, "I was unable to. I was speechless."

The first day I visited Jan, something very interesting happened. Jan told me, "You know what? The Czech government is paying for the restaurant and hotel, but our luggage hasn't arrived yet. There are certain things we need to buy."

I looked at his unshaven face and immediately said, "You probably need a shaving kit?"

"Yes, yes." He also told me that the leading man needed socks, and Ida needed some hair supplies. So I went out and bought all the items for about ten dollars. They treated me like a king for what I had done for them.

After winning, Jan immediately got several offers in the United States to make movies. He was a king now, so to speak, in Czechoslovakia and was able to make things happen. He was a great filmmaker but really didn't want to stay in the United States, so he returned to Czechoslovakia. When the Czech Revolution tore apart the country, Jan finally decided to come back to the United States with his family and stay.

After his arrival, Jan first taught motion picture directing in New York and then at the American Film Institute here in Los Angeles. He started making films but refused most of the projects that were offered to him. His philosophy was that he wanted to make films with messages. In that respect, he was not your typical director. He wasn't a big financial success.

Jan settled into a comfortable Santa Monica apartment looking out at the ocean. He was very happy. One time, I went over to see him and from the swimming pool with a gleam in his eye Jan said, "I'm going to make a motion picture with Mohammed Ali." That picture was *Freedom Road* which was featured on television.

When Jan got the original script, it had a happy ending. Jan changed the script and ended it his own way, as he felt would have happened if it had been a real incident. After we watched the show, I called him up and talked to his wife. I congratulated them for the great picture that Jan made. She told me, "When we watched the ending of the show, I turned to Jan and I told him, "You know, the ending of your picture is very close to what Peter said in his poetry." That is perhaps the greatest compliment I have ever gotten in my life. I had already written my poem on the Little Polish Boy, but had yet to publish it.

Unfortunately, Jan was a heavy smoker. After the movie was finished, he was diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. Shortly after he died, his wife also died. On a positive note, I was able to introduce Jan to Oscar-winning motion picture artist Ralph McQuarrie. They became good friends because of me.

At Jan's funeral, I walked slowly to Jan's coffin and put my hand on it. The president of the American Film Institute was there and said a few words. Every atom of my body said, "Thank you, Jan, for all you did for me years ago. Thank you for refusing motion picture offers where there was no message, only large sums of money. Thank you for teaching at the American Film Institute."

“Hoping I’ll be able to find you in heaven, just as I’ve found you in Czechoslovakia.”

“GOODBYE FOR NOW”



Jan Kadar with his wife, Judith,
at their home in Santa Monica, California,
a few weeks before his death



Jan Kadar
in Israel

Chapter 9 – INVENTIONS AND OBSESSIONS

“AT AGE 15, MY LITTLE INVENTION HELPED KEEP THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE FROM GOING TO BED HUNGRY EVERYDAY.”

Although Jan Kadar was an inspiration for me, I always got a high adrenaline rush from trying and doing inventive and creative things from my earliest childhood.

When I was six or seven, my father went to the piano and started playing the music from the first talkie, *The Jazz Singer*, that starred Al Jolson. It had a wonderful effect on me.

“Daddy, I would like to learn how to play this music on the piano.” I sat next to him and didn’t leave until I was able to play it. Later, after my dad left the room, I played it again and felt rewarded.

Another fascinating aspect of creativity is the ability of a person’s mind to concentrate when you want something very badly. In my case, it was a motorbike. I was only 13, and while money wasn’t a problem, my short stature was. Every motorbike made was too big for me. Otherwise, my father would have bought me one. Then the Germans came out with a motorbike called a Saxonette. It was a 60cc bike with an engine placed on the rear wheel, like a circular drum. When I saw it, I had to have it. But even when we lowered the seat all the way down, my feet still wouldn’t reach the ground, so my father refused to buy it.

The thought then occurred – why couldn’t we have the same bike frame made like a woman’s bike where the frame dips down? My father said to the man, “Can you build it like that?” The man didn’t know. I made a big search over Budapest until I found a shop that made a bike exactly like the one I dreamed up in my head. After I found the bike, my dad bought it for me. That was the first time I can recall where my mind worked like an engineer’s to turn a defeat into a success.

When I was young, I always wrote little short stories. I made them up for my own amusement and not for any other reason. Later on in life, I always found it easy to tell a story when the occasion demanded it.

Another activity that evolved into an obsession was chess. When I was 13 turning 14 and residing in the so-called Jewish house, there was a man in a wheelchair who made his living selling newspapers. In the evenings, he was free and loved playing chess. As a natural, very sharp chess player, he beat me thousands of times while teaching me finesse and all the tricks. I became a strong player because of him.

In the late sixties, in Hollywood, California, I picked up a chess magazine. I became a member of the American Chess Federation and decided to enter some tournaments. I didn't do too well, losing every single game in one tournament. Then I noticed people had books and studied them on how to open the game, etc. I went to a bookstore and bought several books on openings and a book from the Russian chess genius, Aron Nimzovich, called *My System*.

For the next six months, I studied how to open the game, how to do gambits and counter gambits. I studied lots of great but not perfect counter gambits, because I believed people did not study mediocre things. The truth is, if you are not familiar with a mediocre counter gambit, even if it is not perfect, you can lose, because you don't know why that gambit is mediocre and how to handle it right.

After I studied for six months, I entered a Hollywood chess tournament. Before the game, it was decided who was playing whom. My first match was with a first "Class A" player. He told me smilingly that our game shouldn't last too long, meaning that he would beat me to a pulp in no time.

He started with a King Pawn Gambit opening, and I used one of my very well-practiced mediocre counter gambits. He started looking at me and became panicky. He was right. The

game didn't last too long. In 15 moves, he was checkmated. My other four games were similar, and I became the chess champion of Hollywood in 1970!

I always believed that to become a great chess player, one had to be a genius. After I learned the truth about chess, I never entered a tournament again. The mystique had evaporated.

When I was about 15, I would often go to Budapest cafes for entertainment. I became fascinated by one man who was a tremendous juggler and magician. After the show, I talked to him and told him I would like to learn from him.

Not only was I fascinated by his magic, but I realized that if I became an entertainer, I could get a passport and go overseas legally. I thought this might be a terrific opportunity. For three days each week, I practiced juggling and tricks from this man, as well as rehearsing in my spare time.

After a year, I took a board exam. The way it worked, leading Hungarian magicians and entertainers were there scoring you. I was pretty inventive, so, in addition to what I learned, I made up my own tricks which nobody had done before. These people knew it because they were in the business. It was a serious exam; about 40 percent of the people flunked. They were stopped in the middle of the act.

When my turn came, my 10-15 minute performance drew a rousing ovation. As I left the stage, several agents came to me. I could have had offers to play in nightclubs. After a serious talk with my mother, it was decided that I forego my entertainment ambitions.

I also invented a meat cooker in Hungary. One day I saw a little food machine which generated steam and kept the meat on top of it warm. I thought to myself, I would do the same thing with a twist – instead of just a very small shallow container which boils and warms the meat, I made the container big enough to put in a lot of different kinds of meats and cook them.

Then when I put the cooked meat outside and kept it warm from the steam, I could put in the second portion of meat and cook it at the same time. People loved it.

We had a little deli after the war. Across from us was a bakery. In those days, you could go to the bakery and buy a few slices of bread. After people would buy the bread, they would come to me and buy some inexpensive, warm meat and have a good sandwich for very little money. Looking back, even though it wasn't a remarkable invention, it was quite inventive for a 15-year-old. Most importantly, it helped other people as well as made money.

During the late 1960s when I went to chess tournaments, I noticed that everybody had to bring their chess figures, chessboard, books and clock with them. It was hard physically to carry it all. I saw one man who dropped his chessboard in the hotel elevator. While he tried to pick up the board, he dropped his chess books. It was a bit of a clown act, appearing like he'd never be able to pick them up altogether.

Inspired by his mishap, I invented a tournament chess set. It was a little piece of luggage in which you could carry everything in safety. When you got to the chess game, you'd put the set on the table, the luggage would open on its side and all the pieces would be standing there ready to play. I called it the Fischl tournament chess set. I had ten sets handmade by a luggage company, printed flyers and sent them all over.

Success was not immediate, so I gave up the whole thing. I threw out my dies and the whole setup. Three years later, a big company which sells pipes in gift shops contacted me. They wanted to put my chess set in their Christmas catalog. But it was too late. I had nothing to offer them. Nevertheless, it taught me a valuable lesson.

I started attending the Los Angeles Trade Technical College in California. I went for three years in the evening and earned a degree in printing and advertising. That changed my life. I learned how to do a lot of things right.

My final invention was perhaps my most ambitious. It was a little electric car. I called up my friend Ralph McQuarrie, a sensational designer, and talked with him a long time about the possibility of building this car. He liked what he heard and made a painting of my dream showing a miniature Model T Ford car. I became so obsessed with this idea that within the next three months I was able to generate loans enough to come up with a working prototype of the car, even though I only had \$500 in my bank account! Although I never fully realized my dream, it was remarkable what I was able to create from just one fanatical idea.

Chapter 10 – RALPH MCQUARRIE

“RALPH MCQUARRIE DESIGNED *STAR WARS*© FROM A TO Z.

IT WAS RALPH’S FIRST 20 ILLUSTRATIONS THAT GOT

LUCAS THE MONEY NEEDED TO MAKE *STAR WARS*©.”

Ralph McQuarrie has had a profound effect on my life. I met Ralph about 35 years ago through my sister. She introduced me to Paul Gruell, a highly talented artist who worked for Hanna-Barbera and lived in Burbank. We became friends and did some silk screening projects together. I mentioned to Paul that I’d like to do a project on Grauman’s Chinese Theatre. Paul suggested that I contact his friend Ralph McQuarrie. They worked together as illustrators at Boeing for about five years.

Paul introduced me to Ralph, and I called him and told him what I had in mind. He sounded interested but was very busy. I didn’t hear from Ralph for a long time and almost gave up on my idea when one day Ralph called. We met at an International House of Pancakes where Ralph carefully listened to my ideas. He was very observant, listening to the smallest detail. He sounded interested in doing a portrait of the Grauman’s Chinese Theatre. We did this project, but for several reasons shelved it. That was our first project together.

From that time on, we became good friends and saw each other probably two or three times a week. We had interesting conversations and visited a number of museums and art shows. I learned a lot from Ralph. He’s super intelligent, very knowledgeable and can do almost anything in any media.

Ralph was interested in anything new. Many times I would have things in mind and talk to Ralph about them. He’d become fired up and help me design them. For example, that

tournament chess set I developed. Within a week, Ralph came up with a rendering that I still have hanging on my wall.

Ralph got a job on Melrose Avenue close to La Cienega in a little building called Reel 3 Studio. They were doing a lot of small movie and advertising projects. It was the time of the Apollo 11 flight to the moon, and Walter Cronkite was narrating. This studio made the animation showing how the rocket ship went to the moon. Ralph was hired to do that because Paul Gruell worked there, and they needed a top-flight talent for this job.

One day I visited Ralph at the studio, and he introduced me to Gordon Legg. He was one of the main creators of *Fantasia* for Walt Disney. Other people visited the studio and noticed Ralph's work. When George Lucas was looking for some artists for his *Star Wars*© movie, two gentlemen recommended Ralph.

Lucas came up to see Ralph at his apartment on Curson Avenue at the corner of San Vicente to talk with him at length about his ideas. Nothing happened for about a year, but he came back and hired Ralph to do the first illustrations of *Star Wars*©. There were about 20 paintings in that first portfolio. They included costumes, set designs, space ships and the characters R2D2 and Darth Vader. Those first illustrations were later published by George Lucas as a portfolio book of *Star Wars*© by Ralph McQuarrie and sold several hundred thousand copies.

I recall the time when Ralph talked to George Lucas in his home about the character of Darth Vader. George had no mask in mind for his Darth Vader at the time. It was Ralph who suggested it. He had a lot of engineering background from his work with airplanes and the like, so he brought a lot of realism to the machines. He told George that Darth Vader should wear a mask because he's stepping out into the universe where there is no oxygen. That's how the famous mask idea came about.

An interesting sidelight to this is that my sister bought Ralph's old car when Ralph left Los Angeles and moved to Berkeley. One day the car broke down and had a problem with the distributor. The distributor cap was taken off, and my sister was quick to point out that the cap had some resemblance to Darth Vader!

On the day of my son's wedding near Berkeley, Ralph and I were looking at trees since the wedding was held in a forest. Ralph said, "Look! Nature is the greatest artist in this universe." I brought up the incident with the distributor cap, and Ralph said that he didn't do it consciously. But I'd be willing to bet his mind photographed the distributor cap when he saw it and stored it. Years later, part of the distributor cap became the mask of Darth Vader. That's a story I don't think anyone knows!

Ralph's tremendous success hasn't changed him one bit. He's still the same likeable, easy-going kind of person he was 35 years ago when I first met him. Books have been written about him and his work – *The Illustrated Star Wars Universe* was published a few years ago with his name on the cover.

It's very interesting that out of the many awards received by *Star Wars*© nobody mentioned Ralph's name when the Academy Awards were given. Deep down I always suspected that George Lucas felt Ralph deserved to have an Academy Award.

When Ron Howard made the film, *Cocoon*, they hired the special effects studio from George Lucas, and George made Ralph one of the key persons in that picture's special effects. Ralph won an Academy Award for Lucas Studios' special effects for *Cocoon*. That's how Ralph won his award. But that's okay. An Academy Award is an Academy Award.

In a nutshell, Ralph is a very down-to-earth guy that no amount of money can buy. As you will now discover, without Ralph McQuarrie "To The Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up" might never have happened.

Chapter 11 – BRINGING THE LITTLE POLISH BOY TO LIFE

**“I SAT FROZEN IN MY SEAT. I THEN REALIZED THAT I HAD
NO CHOICE BUT TO PUBLISH MY POEM SO THAT WHAT HAPPENED
TO THE LITTLE POLISH BOY MUST NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.”**

In 1965, I was walking on Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles and stopped at an old bookstore where I browsed a pile of old *Life* magazines. I picked up the November 28, 1960, *Life* magazine which had an interview with Adolph Eichmann prior to the time he was captured. Page 106 featured a picture of the Jews captured in 1943 after the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in a photo taken by an unknown German photographer. Nazi SS General Jurgen Stroop used this photo for his newsletter showing how the Jews were gathered together and terminated and was sending this photo to Adolph Hitler for his birthday.

What was different about this picture was the Little Polish Boy who held his arms up with a look of utter desolation on his face. Seeing this picture unleashed a torrent of memories. My dead father . . . a little calf being led to the slaughter . . . then fighting in vain for its life as I cheered it on . . . explosions of hundreds of bombs . . . shouts and gunshots in the ambulance station as my father desperately gave me his last goodbye . . . the deaths of nameless millions.

Still shaken, I returned home. My mind was in a trance-like state. As I sat down, I felt that the Little Polish Boy had left the page of *Life* magazine and had followed me home to Glendale. His spirit sat in my lap and talked to me. Maybe he was just looking for somewhere to live. I asked the Little Polish Boy what happened to him after the picture was taken. But I could never get a definitive answer from him. The Little Polish Boy seemed interested in me and my story and asked me many questions.

We both came to one conclusion: that the Nazis should be punished eternally for
CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY so this world will Never Forget and will REMEMBER Who
They Were and what they have done to HUMANITY.

Years went by and the Little Polish Boy would visit me from time to time. One night I
woke up at two o'clock in the morning and realized the Little Polish Boy was gone. I walked
into the living room and sat down at the typewriter. The photograph from *Life* magazine had
branded my mind. I knew NO WORDS COULD BE FOUND TO EXPRESS MY PAIN.

I started my poem, "I would like to be an artist so I could make a painting of you Little
Polish Boy." That painting, done in red and black brush strokes, could probably express the
impossible pain you felt.

I kept writing as the image flickered to life in my mind.

"Standing with your little hat on your head
the Star of David on your coat
standing in the Ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you."

I was writing in that verse what consumed and possessed me: On one side, the Little
Polish Boy, his harmless innocence, on the other side, the well-equipped Nazi soldiers.

The cruel, unjustifiable absurdity – yet reality – of human injustice.

The poem at this point flowed totally from my subconscious. I had recalled that old
masters in poetry repeated their most important statements to make a point. So I did likewise.

The next verse, "I would make a monument of you and the world who said nothing,"
assures the Little Polish Boy THAT HE WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN.

I wanted to make sure that this time the world will have to see and hear this innocent victim and do something: the “WORLD WHO SAID NOTHING.”

The WORLD, meaning millions of people standing by: dumb, mute, speechless, in TOTAL SILENCE, tolerating, participating, supporting what is going on, instead of using their capabilities and confronting injustice and crimes against humanity.

In my mind, what the Monument will look like:

STANDING TALL, HUGE AS A STATUE OF A GIANT, surrounded by millions of people who are essentially SMALL morally speaking, being afraid in spite of their power TO SPEAK UP against INHUMANITY.

The next three-line verse is again talking to the Little Polish Boy and telling him that he will be put into different forms of ART so he will reach a great audience.

The next verse is a repeat, bringing back the FOCUS to the domineering point.

The verse with the word CONCERTO – in this case a substitute for MONUMENT in the earlier two-line verse – will also be an ART FORM in which the poet will express his AWAKENING OUTCRY.

I explain to the Little Polish Boy that I am unable to paint, but my creative mind has painted a painting of him. It will be “Ten Million Miles High” and so striking that it will make it impossible for people to turn their heads away.

The next repeated verse ties together, as an image with the one-line verse following “And the World who said nothing.”

In the following, I fulfill my promise as well as my premise to the Little Polish Boy that this Universe will be punished and the Little Polish Boy will be remembered **FOREVER**.

The first punishment is that the Ten Million Miles High painting is so bright that it is blinding the people who are looking at it. People will become blind who could not see an injustice even when they had their eyes.

The relevance of the tragedy of the Little Polish Boy reaches outrageous dimensions so the entire Universe will be aware of it and will have to absorb it.

The verse “And the monument will tremble” is based on my WWII experience as a child, hiding in an apartment building on the fifth floor while the allies were bombing Budapest. I had to stay in a dark room in total silence, not being able to join the rest of the tenants in the basement-cellar of the building.

The apartment building is trembling in the darkness. The noise is unbearable and scary, and, for a young boy totally alone, the true meaning of fear becomes a reality.

I felt that the World – individually – has to experience FEAR as such, so they know what fear is and how it feels, thus never imposing it upon another person like it was imposed upon the Little Polish Boy who was deadly frightened by the Nazi soldiers.

The visual effect “And the Monument will tremble” makes it clear and emphasizes the fact that the huge giant-sized Little Polish Boy WILL NOT STAND STILL IN SILENCE, but it will TREMBLE according to and with its FULL GIANT SIZE.

Then the WORLD – the people – who are surrounding it will experience and know fear and will learn from it.

“The World Who Said Nothing” is no longer the same WORLD who stood by at the beginning of the poem with ignorance and not caring. This time they will know themselves, individually, what and how it feels like to be the Little Polish Boy, because they have seen it, heard it, experienced it.

The poet is not a composer, but he will fulfill his promise: he will awaken the silent world.

He uses five trillion trumpets in order to create the SOUND that humans cannot escape and forces them to listen and pay attention to worthy events: suffering, abuse, victimizing innocent little GIANT HUMAN BEINGS.

The images – “Blinded,” “Deaf,” frightened to the utmost – show where indifference and inhumanity will lead.

At this point, I stopped and felt my poem was finished.

I re-read the entire poem again.

I cried uncontrollably for a very long time.

After I stopped crying, I typed the last verse.

“I AM SORRY THAT IT WAS YOU AND NOT ME.”

* * * * *

In an interview, Arthur Miller, author of *Death of a Salesman*, was asked what his play was about.

He said (smiling), “A salesman dies.”

Should someone ask me the same question about my poem, I should say: “The poem is about a Little Polish Boy Standing with His Arms Up!”

The truth is that my poem will mean many different things to many different people --

DON'T BE INDIFFERENT!

BE WILLING TO SEE AND HEAR.

PAY ATTENTION AND LISTEN.

BE COMPASSIONATE TO ALL HUMANITY!

NEVER TURN YOUR HEAD FROM INJUSTICE!

but the message will remain:

DON'T EVER HURT THE INNOCENT

BECAUSE OF HIS RACE OR THE COLOR OF HIS SKIN!

* * * * *

Even though I had written my poem, I didn't publish it. I felt that I wasn't a poet, and I felt that by publishing it I would be exploiting the Little Polish Boy. Then, 25 years later in 1994, I saw Steven Spielberg's film, *Schindler's List*, with my daughter. After seeing the film, I sat frozen in my seat. I then realized that I had no choice but to publish my poem so that what happened to the Little Polish Boy must never happen again.

Luckily, I knew Ralph McQuarrie. This Academy Award winning artist-genius helped translate my vision into a powerful reality. He helped me select the ink, size and layout for my work. He did subtle things to the lighting and pushed the images in various ways to help create a stunning effect. Finally, I decided to publish the large lithograph version in side-by-side matching English and French translations to give my work a universal appeal, since French is a language commonly used by diplomats. I had access to a brilliant French poet who helped with the translation. My vision had become a reality.

S T E V E N S P I E L B E R G

30 June 1995

Peter Fischl
229 1/2 East Cedar Avenue
Burbank, California 91502

Dear Peter,

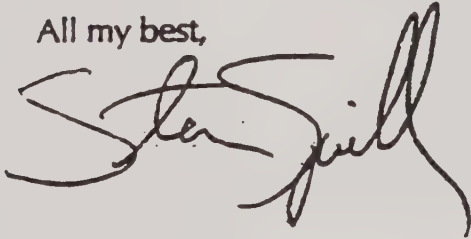
I just received your letter and poster from my production manager, Andy Nicastro. I am so honored that seeing SCHINDLER'S LIST moved you to publish this powerful, soulful poem.

Life's picture of the little Polish boy with his arms up is an indelible image - it's one I've never forgotten. In fact, we use it in documentary and presentation reels for the Foundation, because in a moment it speaks volumes to what happened in the Holocaust.

Thank you again for your kind thoughts, and for the signed poster. I'm having it immediately framed to hang in our Foundation offices. But most of all, thank you for giving us the greatest gift: your testimony for our archive.

Wishing you continued happiness and success—

All my best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Spielberg", with a stylized, flowing script.

FROM

SURVIVOR

TO

ADVOCATE

Chapter 12 – THE LITTLE POLISH BOY STARTS TALKING

TO THE WORLD IN MUSEUMS

**“I NOW KNOW THAT ‘THE LITTLE POLISH BOY’ HAS BECOME A VEHICLE
THROUGH WHICH I AM ABLE TO TELL A STORY OF THE HOLOCAUST”**

I began calling museums around the country and found the response to my work positive. Today, my poem resides in about 20 famous libraries and museums around the world. These include two museums in Australia and in the library at the Anne Frank house in Amsterdam, Holland. The Holocaust Museum in Budapest, Hungary, also has my poem. From Israel, a Kibbutz has contacted me and informed me they are building a Holocaust museum and requested the use of my materials.

On February 20, 1995, my poem was dedicated at the Budapest ambulance station from where my father and others were deported to Mauthausen. They also have my Little Polish Boy poem in Auschwitz, Poland. Recently, I received requests for some of my poems to be used in Poland for Holocaust education studies.

* * * * *

I have a very good friend who was a death camp victim and survivor, Professor Robert O. Fisch, an outstanding professor in medicine, a superb illustrator and writer, and doctor living in Minnesota. We have been friends for over 60 years, having grown up together in Budapest. As kids and teenagers, we loved comedy. We both lost our fathers to the Holocaust.

When Robert came to California to visit me, we went to the Getty Museum and had lunch together. Neither Robert nor I knew about the other's Holocaust art. When I saw Robert's book, *Light from the Yellow Star*, I became speechless. Nobody could have come closer in expressing what the Holocaust meant than Robert. He mixed all the miseries of the death camps into his

paintings. I asked him to have his best four originals reproduced in limited edition so people could see them. Robert agreed, and now we have “The Hand,” “The Train,” “The Yellow Star” and “The Star” from his book published in their original sizes. I am a speaker at many schools in the Los Angeles area, and when students ask me what the Holocaust was really like, I then show them “The Hand” and “The Train” lithographs.

I talked with Robert about what could have happened to my father in Mauthausen. He said he knew a doctor who was in Mauthausen. When I visited this man, I introduced myself as “Peter Fischl, the son of Tibor Fischl. My father was taken to Mauthausen, and I understand you were in Mauthausen. Robert told me that you might know what happened to my father.”

He didn’t say anything, not one word. Slowly, he started crying. His crying became nearly hysterical. I don’t know what made him cry. Did he know what happened to my father? Or was he just thinking about the whole Mauthausen death camp which was one of the most sadistic death camps where they didn’t just send people to gas chambers, but tortured them on a daily basis? I’ll never know. I never repeated this to anyone, until now.

Robert left me with one profound story that I’d like to share with you. In one of the chambers in Mauthausen, they found a paper from a person who was tortured there. On the piece of paper was written – **“IF THERE IS A GOD, HE CERTAINLY WILL HAVE TO BEG FOR MY FORGIVENESS.”**

I introduced my friend, Robert O. Fisch, M.D., to the Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum and Educational Center in St. Petersburg, Florida. I found myself invited to participate with my friend, Robert, in the February 21, 1998, reopening of this museum. The ribbon cutting ceremony was performed by Honorary Chairman and Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel. This was an important event for me. **Just like a miracle, I came to the realization that my message of the World who said nothing was beginning to be heard.**

Grieving mother to seek change

Mentally ill son shot to death by sheriff's deputies

By David Beck
Staff Writer

The mother of a mentally ill man shot to death by sheriff's deputies in Montrose vowed Tuesday to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

"They had an opportunity to have him shot with a stun gun or use Mace on him or tackle him," Doreen Cease said from her La Crescenta home.

"They didn't have to shoot him 12 times. The way he died is going to be dealt with," she said.

Sheriff's Deputies were called to the 2500 block of Montrose Avenue early Sunday morning in response to reports of a man—later identified as Aaron Cease—swinging a broken crutch at pedestrians.

"They ordered him to drop the crutch and surrender but the man (Cease) refused and began jabbing at them with the crutch and advanced toward them," sheriff's spokeswoman Angie McLaughlin said.

Cease carried the crutch occasionally to ease recovery from an injured ankle, his mother said.

The deputies, whose identities have not been revealed, reportedly retreated 120 feet while being followed by the 30-year-old Cease, who had suffered from "clinical depression" for 12 years, according to his mother.

"When the suspect lunged at the deputies with the crutch, they fired several rounds at him, fatally wounding him at the scene," McLaughlin said.

It has been widely reported that Cease was hit 12 times, but sheriff's officials would neither confirm nor deny the report.

The deputies involved in the shooting have been assigned temporarily to desk jobs.

"It is our policy that if you're involved with a shooting, you're taken off patrol for a week," said Capt. Lee Davenport, commander of the Crescenta Valley Station.



Roger Wilson/Staff Photographer

Peter Fischl hangs a poster with his poem about the Holocaust and the photo that inspired it at the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance.

Holocaust remembered in poetry

By Britt Tunick
Staff Writer

Although his father was killed by Nazis, it was a chilling black and white photograph that forever changed Peter Fischl's life.

Growing up in Budapest, Hungary, during the Holocaust, Fischl spent his childhood in hiding. He was 14 when his father was killed.

Today, the effect of the experience can be seen in Fischl's poetry about the Holocaust, which hangs in museums around the world.

In 1957 during the Hungarian Revolution, Fischl and a group of others escaped from Hungary. After stealing a truck and making their way by foot and train to Austria, the group came to America to begin new

lives.

Fischl left a refugee camp in New Jersey and settled with his family in New York before eventually coming to California. He received a degree in printing and advertising from Los Angeles Trade Technical College and settled in Glendale for 31 years before moving to Burbank.

But his childhood experiences were something he'd never forget.

An inventor and a creative person, he eventually found a vehicle through which he could share his feelings: poetry.

Fischl wrote a poem titled "To the Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up" about a photo he saw in a 1960 issue of Life magazine. The photo of a 1943 roundup of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto

shows a little boy holding up his hands.

"I never intended to publish the poem because I felt this would be exploiting the little Polish boy," Fischl said.

Cover story

The image of the child remained with Fischl, eventually consuming him.

More than five years after seeing the photo, he awoke one night and wrote his poem.

"The picture of this little Polish boy started living with me in my mind. I had a horrible pain in me about this happening," Fischl said.

After completing his poem, Fischl shared it with a few people and filed it away for more

than 25 years.

"I had no desire to publish this or anything, it just came out of me and I felt better," Fischl said.

Last year, however, Fischl and his daughter went to see Steven Spielberg's film about the Holocaust, "Schindler's List," and once again Fischl was consumed by the photo of the child.

"After the motion picture, I was frozen to my seat and knew that I had to publish my poem," Fischl said.

Though he previously believed publishing his work would be exploiting the child, he changed his views.

See FISCHL/Page A5

Police may hire 5 officers

Preliminary approval has been reached

By Ed Kamlan
Staff Writer

The city of Glendale received preliminary approval Tuesday to hire five additional police officers under the federal Crime Bill. Police Chief James Anthony said.

If approved by the City Council and the U.S. Justice Department, the officers could be trained and assigned to the four-month-old community-oriented police bureau in Glendale sometime in 1995, officials said.

The department originally requested funding for seven officers, about 3 percent of its 216 sworn officers.

"Because of the extraordinary response, jurisdictions are being authorized to hire a maximum of 2.5 percent of their Oct. 1, 1994, force strength," Associate Attorney General John R. Schmidt wrote in part to Anthony.

Although details remain to be worked out, the city would be expected to pay 60 percent of the estimated \$900,000 three-year cost for the officers' training and salaries, according to police department spokesman Chahe Keuroghelian.

The Glendale community-oriented police bureau, which focuses on ongoing problems in south Glendale, currently employs three officers and one civilian.

Federal money is going to 630 other government agencies to help them hire nearly 4,700 new police officers requested under the crime law enacted earlier this year.

Grants totaling \$231.7 million will go to 167 municipal and county police departments and county sheriff's jurisdictions with populations of 150,000 and over. A total of \$95.4 million will go to 464 jurisdictions with populations under 150,000.

The program, called "Cops Ahead," is the second under the

See POLICE/Page A5

FISCHL

FROM A1

"I understood the importance of sharing this poem with the world. The message has to be told," Fischl said.

"I now know that 'The Little Polish Boy' has become a vehicle through which I am able to tell a story of the Holocaust."

Fischl began calling museums around the country and found the response to his work nothing but

positive.

Within six weeks of his first calls to museums, he received an order for 100 posters of his work from the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance.

"It is not even a good poem as far as poems are concerned," Fischl said. "It's an outcry against prejudice and terrorists and needless killings in general."

His work has also been hung in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., and at the main ambulance station of the Hungarian Red Cross in Budapest, the station where his father was captured during Fischl's childhood.

"I feel that this is probably the greatest thing I've ever done in my life," Fischl said.

"When the little Polish boy enters a home, it (the home) becomes a museum, and he will speak against prejudice forever."

A copy of Fischl's poem signed by President Clinton is on display at the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance, and posters are available for purchase.

FISCHL

FROM A1



Mr. P.L. Fischl
229-½ East Cedar Avenue
Burbank, California
91502 - 1406
USA

Amsterdam, April 2, 1996

Our reference: V/96.0190B/mb

Dear Mr. Fischl,

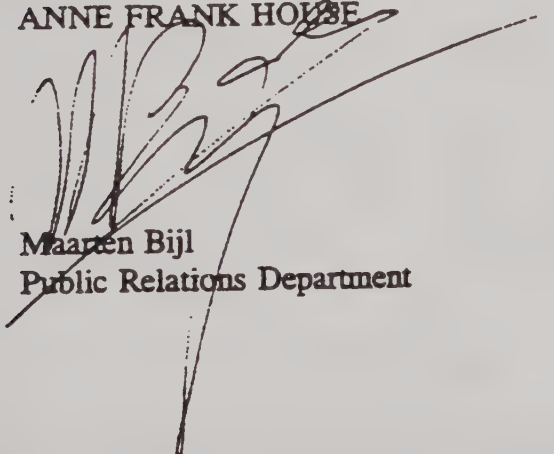
I am very sorry to have kept you waiting for a reply for so long. Please do not interpret it as unthankfulness for the posters you have sent us!

Indeed, we did receive your posters and have already archived a sample in our collection of artistic expressions. This collection is accessible for visitors of our library, and is especially consulted by students and scholars interested in the artistic responses and reactions to the Diary of Anne Frank.

I hope you will be satisfied with this - very belated - response. If you have further questions, please contact us again.

Kind regards,

ANNE FRANK HOUSE



Maarten Bijl
Public Relations Department



SYDNEY JEWISH MUSEUM

THE HOLOCAUST AND AUSTRALIAN JEWISH HISTORY

09 March 1997

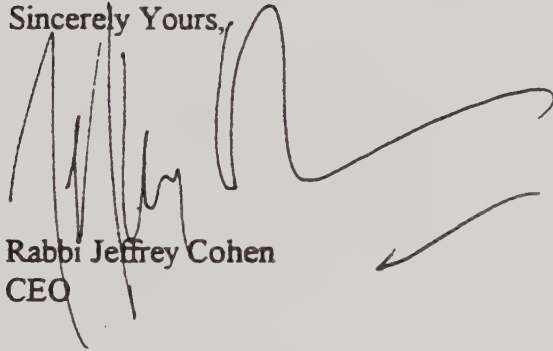
Mr. Peter Fischl
229½ East Cedar Avenue
Burbank CA 91502
USA

Dear Mr Fischl,

Recently the Museum received a generous donation of your poster "the Little Polish Boy" which was given by Vera Ryan of NSW.

We will soon be having it framed and placed within the Museum collection of Post Holocaust Literature.

Sincerely Yours,



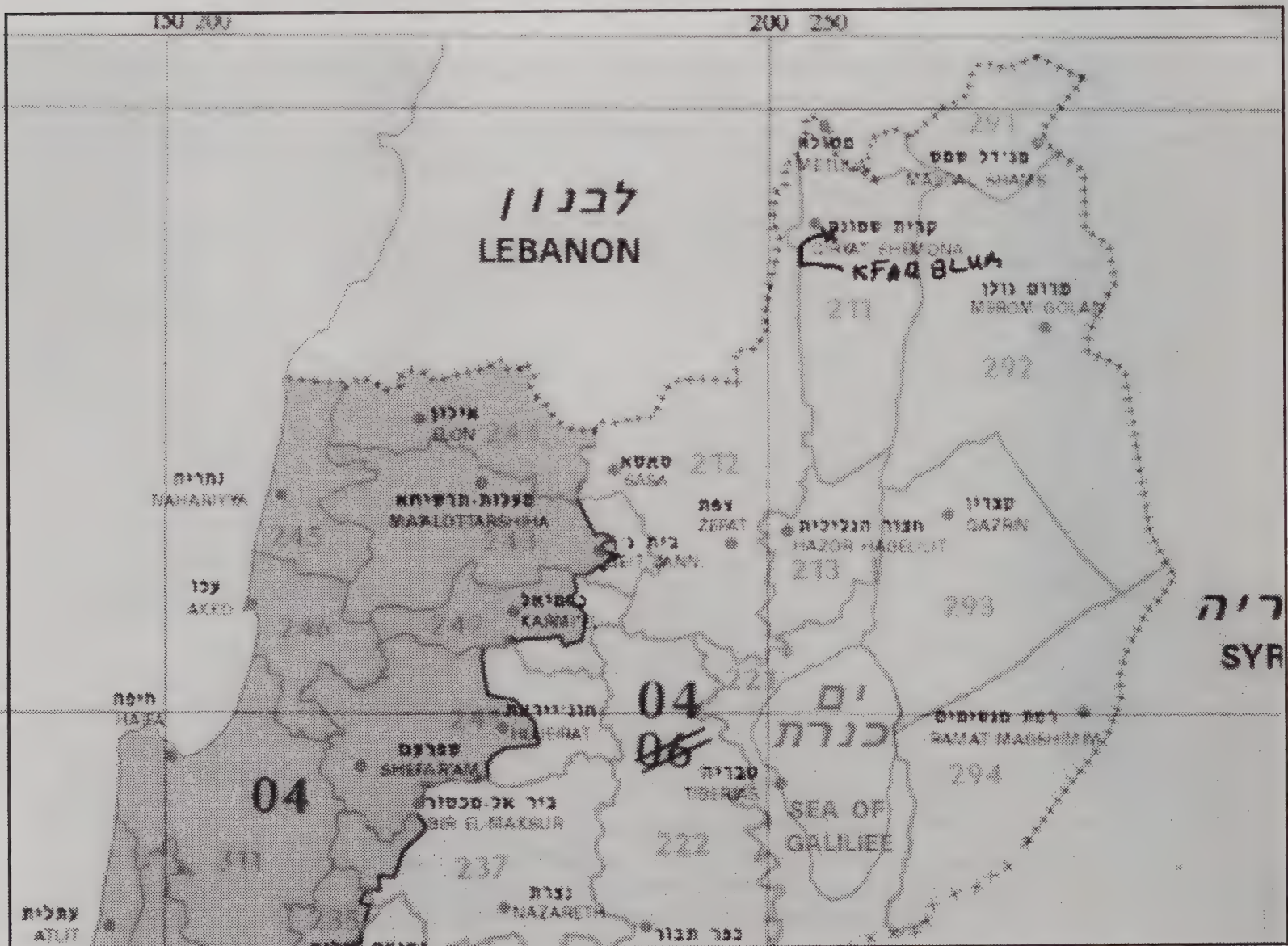
Rabbi Jeffrey Cohen
CEO

IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF JEWISH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS & DESCENDANTS INC.
148 DARLINGHURST ROAD, (CORNER BURTON STREET) DARLINGHURST NSW 2010 AUSTRALIA
TELEPHONE 02 9360 7999 • FACSIMILE 02 9331 4245

The Little Polish Boy is Permanently Exhibited at a Museum at:

Kibutz Kfar Blum 12150 Israel

SEE MAP BELOW FOR LOCATION



אליז פולאני הקטן העומד עמ יציו לא עליה

הייתי רוצה להיות אומן
אז יכולתי לעשות דיוקן שלך
יאלז פולאני קטן

עומד עמ כובעך הקטן
על ראשך
מטן הדוד
על מעילך
עומד בטל

עמ יציק מופאות
כאשר רובים נאצים רבים
מכוונים כלפיק

הייתי עושה מאק גל-עד
ומהעולם שלא אמר דבר

הייתי רוצה להיות מלחין
אז יכולתי לכתוב קונצרטו עליך
יאלז פולאני קטן

עומד עמ כובעך הקטן
על ראשך
מטן הדוד על מעילך
עומד בטל

עמ יציק מופאות
כאשר רובים נאצים רבים
מכוונים כלפיק

הייתי כותב קונצרטו עליך
ועל העולם שלא אמר דבר

אני איני אומן
אך מוחי כבר צייר
דיוקן שלך
יאלז פולאני קטן

גובה עשרה מליון מיל הנו הדיוקן
שכל היקום יוכל לראות אותך עכשיו
יאלז פולאני קטן

עומד עמ כובעך הקטן
על ראשך
מטן הדוד
על מעילך
עומד בטל

עמ יציק מופאות
כאשר רובים נאצים רבים
מכוונים כלפיק

ומהעולם שלא אמר דבר

אעשה את הדיוקן כה גובה
שהוא יגרום לעיניים להתעורר
של העולם שלא ראה דבר

גובה עשרה מליון מיל יהיה הגל-עד
שכל היקום יוכל לזכור אותך
יאלז פולאני קטן

עומד עמ כובעך הקטן
על ראשך
מטן הדוד
על מעילך
עומד בטל

עמ יציק מופאות
כאשר רובים נאצים רבים
מכוונים כלפיק

והגל-עד ירעד
על מנת שהעולם העיוור
עכשיו
ידע
מה גרה פחד בחשכה

העולם
שלא אמר דבר

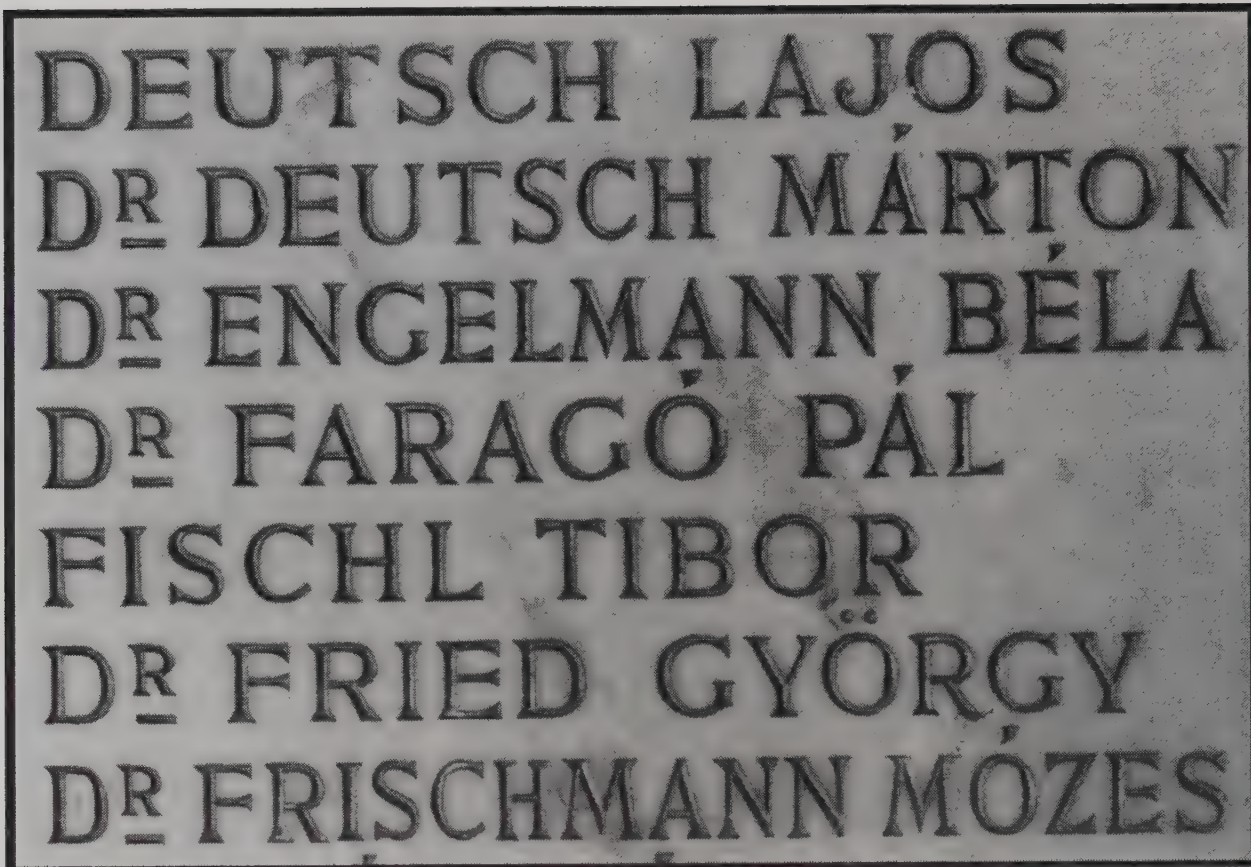
אני איני מלחין
אך אכתוב יצירה
לחמישה מליון חצוצרות
כך שיפוצץ את עור התוף
של גרה העולם

העולמות
שלא שמעו דבר

אני
מצעד

שנה
הייתה אתה
ולא אני

סיר של פטר ל פייטל



Above: The portion of the Wall of Heroes and Martyrs' Memorial which includes the name, Tibor Fischl, Peter's Father, displayed in the Budapest Paramedics Center in Marko-utca

Right: Newspaper article with picture Peter's poem. Caption reads: **The world-famous picture** can already be seen at the 04 Center [04 is equivalent to 911 in America]

A mentés hősi halottainak emlékfala

BUDAPEST-WASHINGTON – Akik az emberi élet mentésére tették életüket, a szokottnál jobban kötődnek a múlthoz is. Egy egységes szervezet ugyanis erősít és összetart a hagyomány ápolása. A hazai mentőszervezet legendásan szépen őrzi a hivatás emlékeit. Különös szeretettel viseltetnek hősi halottaik iránt

Igen, hiszen az embertársaik életéért küzdők is áldozatul esnek a vérzivataros napoknak, háborúknak, forradalmaknak, olykor a békeidők tragédiáinak is. A budapesti mentőközpontban az a folyosó őrzi a mártírok emléktábláit, amelyen a fehér kocsik személyzete nap mint nap szolgálatba jár.

A napokban újabb darabbal bővült az emlékfal. Fischl Tibor egykori mentőápoló gyermekei Amerikából egy műalkotást küldtek, melynek eredetije a wa-

shingtoni Holocaust Múzeumban található. A világhírű kép mellett Fischl Péter

Az ajándék ugyanakkor nem csupán újabb mementó a hősök falán. Több annál,



Fotó: Blikk

A világhírű kép már a 04 központjában látható

gyönyörű verse olvasható, amelyet apja, a magyar mentőszolgálat mártírja emlékére írt.

hiszen az adományozó vállalta a hazai mentésügy képviselését új hazájában, az óceánon túl.

WALL MEMORIAL OF THE HEROIC DEAD
OF THE LIFE-SAVING PARAMEDICS

Translation from Hungarian

In BLIKK article 1995. February 20.

BUDAPEST-WASHINGTON – The ones who commit themselves to saving human lives are the ones who tie themselves more to the past than others. Namely, tradition strengthens and pulls together a unified organization. The beautiful way in which our domestic ambulance life-saving organization keeps alive the memorabilia of their profession is legendary. They show special love toward their heroic dead.

Yes, the ones who fight for the lives of their fellow men fall victim to the blood-stormy days, wars, revolutions, and sometimes even to the tragedies of peacetime as well. In the center of the Budapest Ambulance Station is the hallway where the “white car” workers enter for duty day after day and is where the commemorative plaques of their martyrs are kept.

In recent days the memorial wall increased with a new addition. The children of former ambulance worker, Tibor Fischl, have sent a work of art from America, the original of which is kept at the Holocaust Museum in Washington. Next to the world-famous picture you can read Peter Fischl’s magnificent poem which he wrote in memory of his father, a martyr of the Hungarian Ambulance Service.

Beyond this, the gift is not only a new memento on the Wall of Heroes. It is more than that because Tibor Fischl’s children have accepted representation supporting the domestic ambulance service from their new home overseas.

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N 7-nd



Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum And Educational Center

December 26, 1997

Dr. Robert O. Fisch
Peter L. Fischl
229 1/2 East Cedar Avenue
Burbank, California 91502-1406

Gentlemen,

It is our pleasure to invite Dr. Robert O. Fisch and Peter L. Fischl to participate in the preview evening for The Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum and Educational Center, February 18, 1998 and at the official opening ceremonies and ribbon cutting by Elie Wiesel, our Honorary Chairman, on February 21, 1998.

We are proud to exhibit the seventeen original paintings by Robert O. Fisch from his book, "Light From The Yellow Star" and Peter L. Fischl's poem, "To The Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up".

It is our understanding that you will be glad to sign and personalize prints offered for sale if our visitors ask you to do so.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Goldman
Museum Director

5001 113th Street, St. Petersburg, Florida 33708-2700
(813) 392-4678 / FAX (813) 393-0236

Burbank poet to appear at Holocaust center opening

By June Casagrande, *The Leader*

HILLSIDE DISTRICT — At the time, Peter Fischl couldn't afford to see himself as he must have looked to others: a frightened child hiding from Gestapo and SS troops in a Catholic school house in Budapest.

It was three decades later that, by chance, Fischl saw a photograph of a Polish boy with his hands in the air, four Nazi machine guns aimed at his back. The black-and-white picture in *Life* magazine changed Fischl's life when, four years later, he was finally able to express his feelings in a poem.

Fischl, 67, a Burbank resident and author of "To the Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up," his poetic tribute to the child in the photograph that moved Fischl in a way a firsthand view of the Holocaust could not. A lithograph of his poem is now on display in Los Angeles' Museum of Tolerance.

"I'll make this painting so bright/that it will blind the eyes/of the world who saw nothing."

On Feb. 18, Fischl will be part of the opening ceremonies of the Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum and Educational Center in St. Petersburg, Fla. On Feb. 22, he will appear at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

"The picture, in my mind, is a picture of pure tragedy," Fischl said. "Its effect on me was so powerful the image of that little boy was with me every day for four years until I woke up one morning at 2 a.m. for no reason at all and

wrote the poem."

Fischl was born in 1930 to affluent parents in Hungary. He remembers the slow process that reduced his social status from one of privilege to that of pariah.

"The anti-Jewish laws began," he said. "We weren't allowed to use the tennis courts and other things like that."

By the time he was 13, Fischl said strangers would see the Star of David on his clothes and spit on him in the street. Soon after, the Germans invaded Hungary and his family went into hiding.

Though separated, they all managed to dodge death until the day Fischl got a phone call at the Catholic school.

"My father called to tell me the Gestapo agents had found them at the fire station, they were taking him away," Fischl said. "It was the last time I talked to my father."

Fischl eventually escaped Hungary during the revolution in 1957. He fled to New York before moving to Glendale and eventually Burbank.

"Since seeing the young Polish boy's photograph in a bookstore in Hollywood more than 30 years ago, Fischl now uses his experience to teach others about the horrors of war and hate. He travels to schools giving free talks about the Holocaust and its lessons.

"The most important thing is I want to help people start to think and to educate themselves and to love each other," Fischl said. "So no one ever has to go through what that little Polish boy went through again."

Holocaustmúzeum Floridában

Amerikai-magyar túlélők tanúskodnak a vészkorszakról

„1130695-5” – ez egy vasúti teherkocsi száma. A 15 tonnás lengyel tehervagon a második világháború éveiben meg számlálhatatlan utat tett meg – Auschwitzba, Dachaubá, Treblinkába. A csupasz vagonba gyakran szállt is több zsidó embert zsúfoltak, férfiakat, nőket, öregeket, gyerekeket. Sokuk számára

ez a vagon volt az út vége, a többiekre a megsemmisítő tábor várt. Ez a vagon mostantól fontos missziót tölt be: a floridai Tampa-öböl új holocaust-émlékmúzeumában áll, a treblinkai koncentrációs táborból származó sínparon, és amerikai gyerekeknek, felnőtteknek segít elképzelni az elképzelhetetlent.

Elekes Éva NÉPSZAVA

Három ilyen vagon került Lengyelországból az Egyesült Államokba, az egyik a washingtoni Holocaust Emlékmúzeumban látható, a másik Dallasban. A Tampa-öböl Holocaust Múzeum és Oktatási Központ szakmai megnyitóját szerdán tartották St. Petersburgban, a nagyközönség számára a központ első kiállítását a Nobel-díjas író, Elie Wiesel nyitja meg szombaton, február 21-én. „A hallgatás és a közömbösség minden bűnök legnagyobbika...” – Elie Wiesel e szavait választották a kiállítás mottójának.

A megnyitóra a Kaliforniában élő Peter L. Fischl hívta fel lapunk figyelmét. Ő és egy másik magyar származású holocaust-túlélő, a minnesotai Robert O. Fisch is hivatalos a szombati megnyitóra. Mindketten évtizedekig hallgattak arról, amit átéltek a munkaszolgálatban, a gettóban. Néhány éve azonban személyes missziójuknak tekintik, hogy beszéljenek a vészkorszakról.

Fisch Róbert 1944 márciusában, a német megszállás kezdetén 18 évesen munkatáborba került 280 társával együtt. Három hónappal később közülük már csak 120-an voltak életben. Amikor 1945-ben felszabadították, jártányi ereje sem volt, de élt. Édesapja, akit koncentrációs táborba hurcoltak a náci-

soha nem tért vissza. Fisch Róbert 1956-ban hagyta el Magyarországot, New Yorkba, majd Minnesotába került, 1958-ban gyakor-nokként kezdett dolgozni a helyi egyetemi klinika gyer-

„A sárga csillag fénye: a szeretet üzenete egy holocaust-túlélőtől” címmel képeit kiállította az egyetemi klinika, 17 festménnyel il-lusztrált visszaemlékezése-it könyvben jelentette meg.

jártak, hitelesen próbál-hatom meg ábrázolni a ho-locaust áldozatainak el-hagyatottságát” – írja ké-peiről.

Fischl Péter 14 éves volt, amikor a náci megölte az édesapját. A náci meg-szállás után – mint a Nép-szavának elmondta – őt egy pékségben bújtatták, sző-kött munkaszolgálatosok-kal együtt rejtőzött. Ő is az 1956-os forradalom ide-jén hagyta el Magyarorszá-got, az osztrák menekülttá-borból az Egyesült Álla-

A Life magazin egyik vi-lághíres felvétele szaki-totta fel benne 1960-ban a holocaust fájdalmas emlé-keit. A kép 1943-ban ké-szült, amikor a náci kö-rülzárták a varsói gettót. Fischl Péter verset írt a kis lengyel zsidó fiúnak. Magának írta a verset, soha nem is akarta közzétenni. Csak nemrégiben vette elő, amikor lányával megnéz-ték Spiegelberg filmjét, a Schindler listáit. Akkor döntött úgy, megosztja má-sokkal a költeményt, noha maga is tudja, hogy irodal-mi mércével mérve nem jó vers, mégis, kiáltás az elő-ítéletek, a terror ellen. „All-ván kis kalappal / Fejeden / Dávid-csillaggal / Zeké-den / Alván a gettóban / Emelt karokkal / Míg sok náci gépfegyver / Rád irá-mul!” – így szól a vers ref-rénje.

Fischl Péter plakátja a híres Life-fotóval és a verssel ma -

látható a Los Angeles-i Tolerancia Múzeumban a washingtoni Holocaust Emlékmúzeumban és Bu-dapesten is, a Markó utcai Mentőkórházban. Onnan hurcolták el az édesapját Mauthausenbe.

Fisch Róbert és Fischl Péter még Budapestről is-mertek egymást. Néhány éve egymástól függetlenül jutottak arra az elhatáro-zásra, személyesen tanú-skodniuk kell arról, hogy a holocaust borzalmait való-ban megtörténtek. A leg-fontosabbnak azonban azt tartják, mondta Fischl Pé-ter, hogy rendszeresen ta-lálkoznak fiatalokkal, elő-adásokat tartanak, beszél-nek a múltból, így harcol-nak az előítéletek ellen: „Azért, hogy soha többé ne történhessen meg az, ami a kis lengyel fiúnak történt.”



A Life magazin világhíres felvétele

MFL-archív foto

mekosztályán. Ma ő a gyer-mekklinika vezetője.

Fisch doktornak a gyer-mekgyógyászat mellett van egy másik szenvedélye, fest-

A tampa múzeum holoca-ustközpontjának plakátjá-ra Fisch egyik alkotása ke-rült. „Úgy érzem, mivel egy nagyok azok közül, akik ott

mokba, New Jerseybe ke-rült, onnan költözött to-vább Kaliforniába, nyom-dászatot tanult, reklám-szakember lett.

See English translation next page!

HOLOCAUST MUSEUM IN FLORIDA

Translation from Hungarian

In NEPSZAVA article 1998. February 19. Thursday

Hungarian-American Survivors Testify over the Period of Disaster

“1130695-5” is the number of a railway box/freight car. The 15-ton Polish railroad box/freight wagon covered numerous miles (kilometers) during the years of World War II – to Auschwitz, Dachau, Treblinka. Often they crowded more than a hundred Jews, men, women, elderly, children, in the empty wagon. For many, this meant the end of the road. Others reached their destruction in the “elimination” camp. From now on, this railroad box/freight car fulfills an important mission: to try helping to imagine the unimaginable for the American children and adults as it stands on its original metal rails (rails originating from the death camp of Treblinka) in the new Holocaust Memorial Museum in Tampa Bay, Florida.

Three such railroad box/freight cars arrived from Poland to the United States. One can be seen in the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., the other in Dallas, Texas. The opening of the Tampa Bay Holocaust Museum and Education Center for the professionals (people) in the trade was held Wednesday in St. Petersburg. The first exhibit for the general public is going to be opened Saturday, February 21, 1998, by Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize winning writer.

Words of Elie Wiesel were chosen as the motto for the exhibit: “Silence and indifference are the greatest sin of all . . .”

California resident, Mr. Peter L. Fischl, brought the event to our attention. He and another Hungarian-born Holocaust survivor Dr. Robert O. Fisch from Minnesota are also officially invited for the Saturday opening. Both of them kept silent for decades regarding their

experiences in the forced labor camps and ghettos. However, for some years, they make it their business – their personal mission – to talk about the time period of the Holocaust.

Robert Fisch was 18 at the beginning of Nazi occupation in March 1944 when he was taken with 280 companions (fellow workers) into forced working labor camp. Within three months, there were only 120 of them alive. On the day of his liberation in 1945 – though alive – he had no more strength to walk. His father, who was taken to a concentration camp by the Nazis, never returned.

Robert Fisch left Hungary in 1956; arrived first in New York, then to Minnesota. In 1958, he started to work at the local University Clinic as an apprentice in Pediatrics. Today, he is the leading professor of this clinic.

Dr. Fisch has a second passion besides pediatrics: he paints. With the title “The Light of the Yellow Star: A Message of Love from a Holocaust Survivor,” the University Clinic exhibited his pictures. Seventeen of his paintings serve as an illustration of remembrance in this book. One of Fisch’s creations is used on a poster at the center of Tampa Bay’s Holocaust Museum. He writes of his paintings: “Being one of those who was there, I feel I can try to portray the loneliness of Holocaust victims with genuine authenticity.”

Peter Fischl was 14 when the Nazis killed his father. After the Nazis invaded Hungary – as he told to Nepszava – he was in hiding. Among other places, he was hiding in a bakery with inmates (deserters) who had escaped from their forced military labor camp. He himself left Hungary during the 1956 revolution, from the Austrian refugee camp to the United States, into New Jersey from where he continued to California. He studied printing, specializing in promotion (public relations).

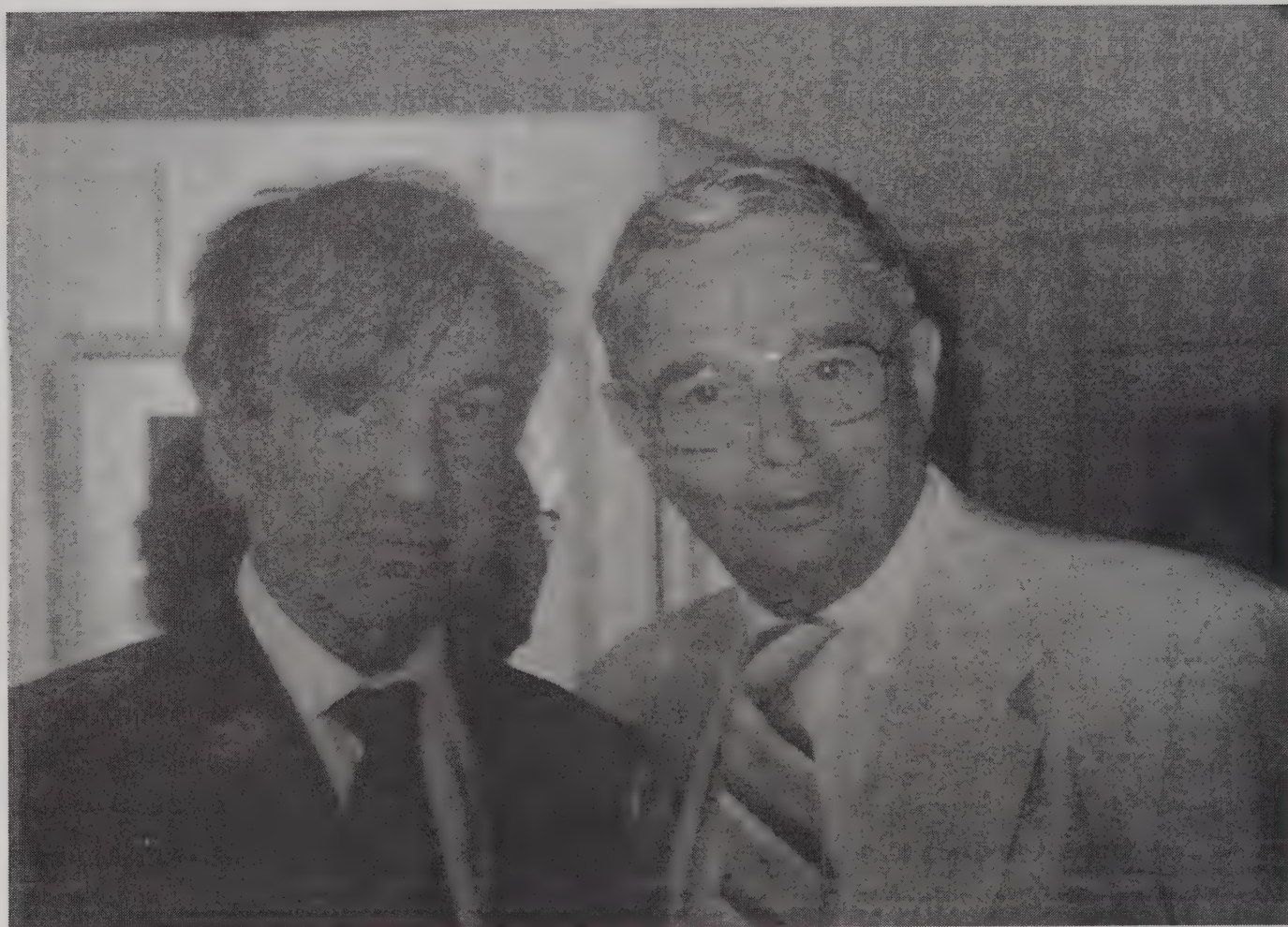
A world-famous picture in *Life* magazine opened up Peter’s painful memories from the Holocaust in 1960. The picture was taken in 1943 as the Nazis surrounded the Warsaw Ghetto.

Peter Fischl wrote a poem to the little Polish Jewish boy (standing in the picture). He wrote the poem to himself, never intending to publish it. Only recently (December 21, 1994) did he take it out of his drawer, after he and his daughter had seen Spielberg's *Schindler's List*. This made him decide to share the poem with others, even though he knew himself that on the literary scale, the poem may not be a "good" one. Nevertheless, it is an outcry against prejudice and terror.

“Standing with your little hat
on your head
the Star of David on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up As many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you” – thus the refrain of the poem.

Peter Fischl's poster, containing the famous picture from *Life* magazine and the poem, can be seen (is on display) in Los Angeles at the Museum of Tolerance; the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.; also in Budapest, Hungary, at the Emergency Paramedics Center in Marko-utca. The very place from where Peter's father was deported to Mauthausen concentration/elimination camp.

Robert Fisch and Peter Fischl knew each other since Budapest, Hungary. Some time ago, independently from one another, they have arrived at the decision that they must personally testify (bear witness) to the fact that the horrors of the Holocaust indeed, really truly, took place. Both of them believe, as stated by Peter Fischl, that the most important thing for them is to meet with the young on a regular basis; give them informative lectures and talk about the past; have discussions, exchanges and sharing experiences. This is the way for them to fight against prejudice. “In order that whatever happened to the Little Polish Boy should never happen again.”



Top: Elie Wiesel, Nobel Prize winning professor, with Peter Fischl.

Bottom: Peter Fischl with Professor Robert O. Fisch at Florida Holocaust Museum. They have been friends for more than 60 years. Robert O. Fisch is the author of the book *Light of the Yellow Star* and 17 world-famous Holocaust paintings.



When I went to the museum in St. Petersburg, Florida, I saw the picture, “Shoes Belonging to Child Prisoners in a Concentration Camp,” and an original railroad boxcar used by the Nazis during the Holocaust to transport Jews and other prisoners to places like Auschwitz, Dachau and Treblinka. They are reminders of the horror and the death to both children and adults, and memories that remain present in the minds of the survivors.

My work brings me into contact with many Holocaust survivors and their stories, too. A successful businessman in Florida learned about me. We made contact, and he told me an incredible story. In Belgium when he was eight years old, the Gestapo captured him along with other Jewish kids. They were locked in boxcars without food, water or toilet facilities. After riding for three days with the horrible smell, he looked up and saw a very tall boy next to him. It was nighttime. He screamed for the boy to pick him up and push him out a narrow window. The tall boy needed no explanation. He threw him out from the running train. Luckily, he fell in between the cracks and survived with minor injuries. When the sun came up, a Belgian farmer found him and decided to hide him from the Nazis until he could be liberated.

* * * * *

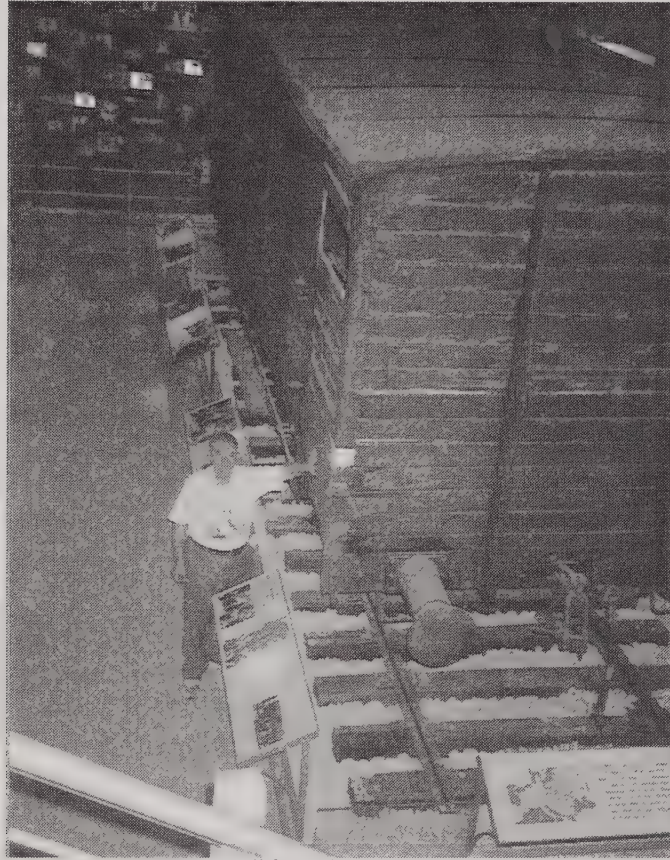
“Many thanks to Stephen M. Goldman, Museum Director, for inviting both of us to the Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum and Educational Center. Thank you for giving us the privilege for being part of this most relevant event and for your graciousness in supporting our work.”

HOPING YOU WILL VISIT THIS OUTSTANDING MUSEUM.

These tiny shoes once belonged to Doris Mathes, daughter of Allie and Richard Mathes. Doris was born in Antwerp in 1941 and died with her mother in 1943, probably at Auschwitz. No one is sure if Doris wore these shoes when she was killed.

Richard Mathes survived the concentration camps. Perhaps he recognized his daughter's shoes after the camps were liberated or retrieved them from the family home in Antwerp. Rabbi Stephen Moch of Temple Beth El presented the shoes to the Florida Holocaust Museum for family friends, Sam and Stella Shura, of New York. The Shuras obtained these shoes from their rabbi, who had been given them for safekeeping. They asked Rabbi Moch where a fitting place would be to donate the shoes, and the rabbi suggested the Florida Holocaust Museum. Here the shoes are displayed to honor the memory of all the children who perished in the Shoah.





Peter Fischl and box car

Standing before you is one of the few remaining railroad box cars used by the Nazis during the Holocaust to transport Jews and other prisoners to places like Auschwitz, Dachau, and Treblinka.

For many of those involved, the seventy-six-year old rail car was the first “place of death” during the Holocaust. The bare freight car often became a suffocation chamber for some of the people (100 or more at a time) who were squeezed into it. Those who survived the trip had to endure the journey under conditions of hunger and thirst, extreme overcrowding, and horrible sanitation. Frequently, the trains halted for hours or days at a time on side tracks or in stations along the way. Many of those deported, especially the elderly and children, died during the journey.

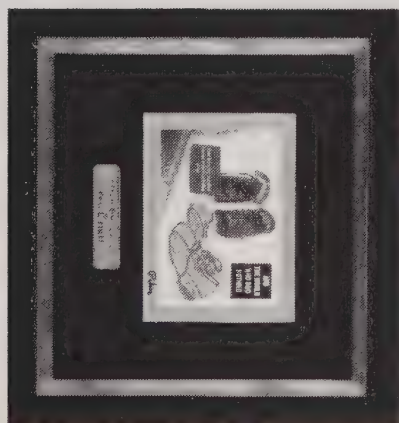
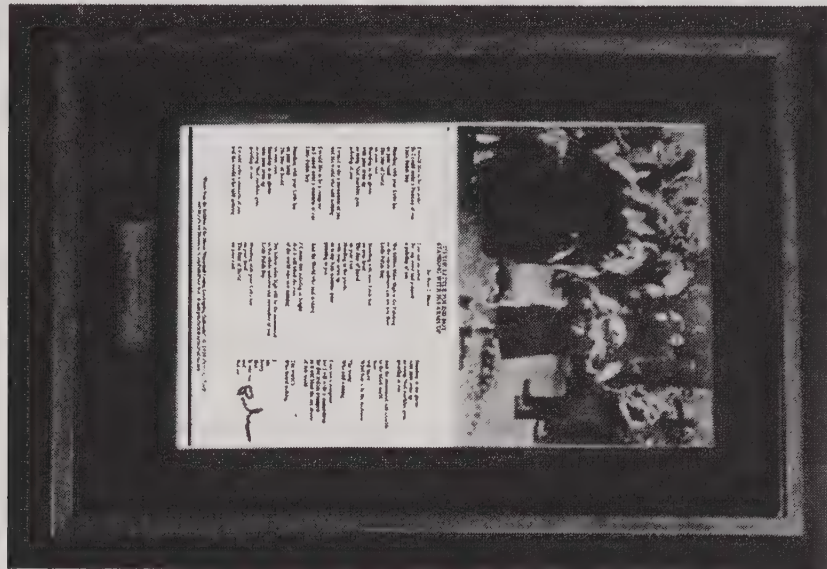
Our 15-ton freight car came to its present location from Gdania, Poland, after more than a year of painstaking negotiations by Walter Loeenberg, founder of the Holocaust Memorial Museum and Educational Center. “It was nearly impossible,” said Loeenberg, who lost four uncles and two aunts in the Holocaust. “The Polish government did not want these cars to come out, but with the help of some dedicated people we were able to bring the car to Florida.” The rail car rests on original tracks from the Treblinka Killing Center.

At this time, there are only two other cars of this type in the United States. One is on display in Dallas, and the other exhibited at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Due to the political unrest in Eastern Europe, combined with the natural deterioration process, it is unlikely that other rail cars will leave Poland.

Exactly how many Jews and other prisoners perished in cars like #1130695-5 will forever remain a mystery. This relic of horrors past must never be allowed to fade from our memory. Today, this car stands in silent tribute to those who perished in the Holocaust.

www.fholocaustmuseum.org

FAX on Page 80 arrived November 12, 2003, almost SIX YEARS AFTER THE
FLORIDA HOLOCAUST MUSEUM OPENED.
THE JOURNEY CONTINUES ...



Display at the Florida Holocaust Museum described by Stephen M. Goldman in his FAX.

Throughout my life, I found that I was able to work with people whom I liked and who have liked me. Nothing great ever came from any other relationship in my life. My friend Robert O. Fisch sent me a copy of the *English Journal* which contained an article written by Nancy Gorrell about Robert as a Holocaust survivor. Nancy Gorrell is an award winning English teacher and published poet from New Jersey. I immediately sat down at my typewriter and wrote a long letter to Nancy thanking her for what she had done in her article. I also related how interesting it is that though Robert and I have been friends for 60 some years and both of us became Holocaust artists, we didn't know of each other's work. Simultaneously, I expressed my desire of how great it would be if we could do something together that would help the children around the world to get an education about the Holocaust.

I sent Nancy an original 18-inch by 28-inch framed copy of my poem, "To The Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up," because I wanted to impress upon her that I was serious with regard to my intentions of working together. I also sent a framed copy to the editor of the *English Journal*. I asked them to hang the framed poems in their offices so the Little Polish Boy would be able to speak to them. The affect was sensational, as Nancy and the editor immediately responded with their intentions that they would do something with the "Little Polish Boy."

The Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., found out about my invitation to Florida, and they asked me if I could stop on my way back in order to sign my poem and meet the public.

Once I heard this, I contacted Nancy Gorrell and the editor, Leila Christenbury, and invited them to join me as they lived nearby in New Jersey. They accepted, and Nancy and

Leila, the editor, drove by car along with Nancy's husband, Joe, and their two daughters, Elizabeth and Sara.

We met and spent an inspiring day together in the museum. I signed my poetry and then got up to speak to some people who had come by. As I spoke, people began to gather, and soon there was a crowd. They all listened to me telling the story about my childhood experiences during the Holocaust. It was a moving and remarkable experience which brought tears to our eyes mutually.

After the event, Nancy, Leila, and the family went with me to a restaurant. We continued to talk about the experiences. From this conversation and our meeting, Nancy began to introduce The Little Polish Boy in her classes.



Nancy Gorrell

“Peter Fischl’s memoir of his holocaust experience adds to the testimony of survivors we will cherish for the coming generations. His personal struggles and triumphs will inspire students and the world to ‘never forget’.”

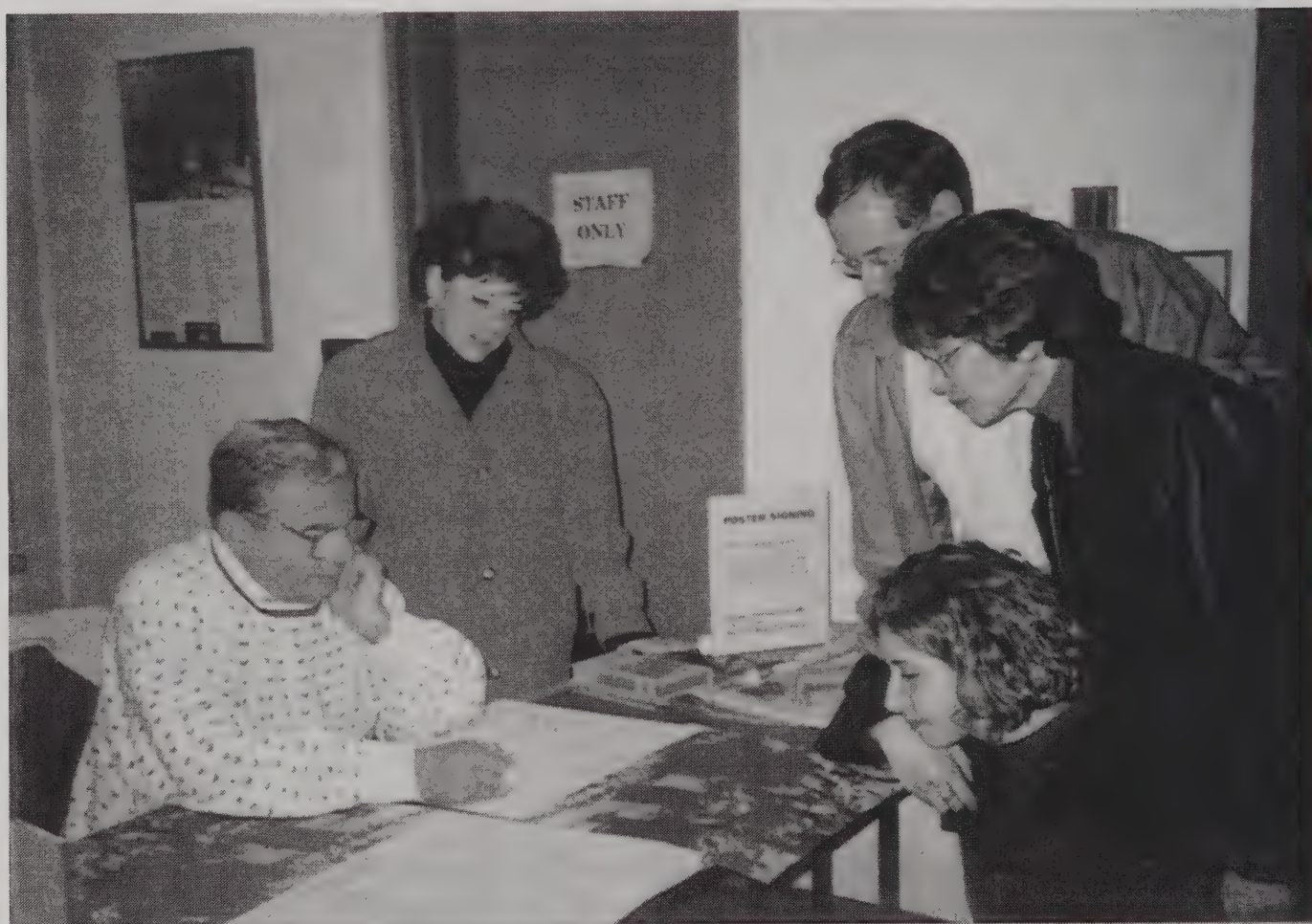
POSTER SIGNING

Peter L. Fischl, poet

**Creator of the poem, "To
The Little Polish Boy
Standing With His Arms
Up," inspired by a 1943
photograph depicting the
roundup of Jews in the
Warsaw Ghetto.**

**Sunday, February 22, 1998
Noon to 4 pm
Museum Shop, First Floor**

Bottom: Editor of the *English Journal*, Leila Christenbury, standing beside Peter. Opposite are Nancy and Joe Gorrell with daughter Sara.



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.

Chapter 13 – THE LITTLE POLISH BOY CHANGING

THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION

**“WHEN THE LITTLE POLISH BOY ENTERS A HOME, IT (THE HOME) BECOMES
A MUSEUM, AND HE WILL SPEAK AGAINST PREJUDICE FOREVER.”**

Several years ago, I took a two-week seminar on how to be a narrator or how to start your own television show. During the first session, they asked for a volunteer to speak on a make-believe stage. I took the challenge and spoke about some of my experiences. Many of the other students in the class were actors or employees of large companies such as Disney. Some of the students asked if I would speak to various organizations about my experiences, and I accepted. From this, I got the idea of speaking in schools. I contacted the Department of Education in Washington, D.C., who recommended I contact the organization Facing History and Ourselves headquartered in Massachusetts. After talking with their President, the Los Angeles representative of Facing History met with me. This organization arranged for me to speak first at Garfield High School and then others.

When my poem was displayed in The Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, the occasion was published in a local paper, the *Glendale News-Press*. The article was read by members of the Burbank Human Relations Council. This organization's mission is to “build brotherhood in our community.” Through them, I also received speaking invitations including local schools.

Since then, I have spoken in many schools and colleges about my experiences. During my numerous presentations, I speak not from a rehearsed speech but spontaneously based on my feelings, thoughts and experiences. This proves very effective with the students generating a more genuine, realistic mutual experience. I also present each student with a hand-signed poem

for them to keep in their home as a reminder, hoping that this way the Little Polish Boy will continue to Speak to them against Prejudice Forever.

At a time when children are pointing guns at other children, the message and work of my Little Polish Boy poem as a healing tool that teaches peace and tolerance is a great reward for me. A number of teachers have provided me with letters and poems from themselves and their students after I have been with them. I would like to share some of these in this book.

The first is Nancy Gorrell who was introduced in the previous chapter. I am including considerable information about her as a teacher, writer, poet and lecturer because of the respect I have for her. She has done an outstanding job of incorporating “To the Little Polish Boy” into her curriculum and writings. After two years of experimenting, she sent her article to the *English Journal*. This ten-page article was published in May 2000 with the title “Teaching Empathy through Ecphrastic Poetry: Entering a Curriculum of Peace.” It is a lesson centered on my poem. Nancy quotes me in the opening of the article. **“The most important thing is . . . I want to help people to start to think and to educate themselves and to love each other, so no one ever has to go through what that little Polish boy went through again.”** With this teaching concept, she has helped her students and other teachers to read with empathy and to understand the human condition so that others will not be made to experience what the little Polish boy and so many others have experienced.

Ms. Gorrell attended the University of Wisconsin, Madison (1964-67) and received a BA degree Summa Cum Laude from the State University of New York at Stony Brook (1968). In 1970, she received an MA degree in cultural history from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She teaches 11th grade English and creative writing at Morristown High School, Morristown, New Jersey, where she has been on the staff since 1972. She serves as district coordinator for SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity), a teacher-led in-service

training program for staff. Ms. Gorrell is an active member of National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the affiliate (NJCTE) where she has served on committees, led workshops, judged writing competitions and reviewed publications. Ms. Gorrell has been trained in aesthetic education at Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts and has participated in their aesthetic education program for over a decade.

Ms. Gorrell has published articles on the teaching of poetry and holocaust including the article using my poem. She has published numerous articles in *English Journal* and NCTE books and was a recipient of the Paul and Kate Farmer *English Journal* Award in 1997 for her article, "Teaching the Holocaust: *Light from the Yellow Star* Leads the Way." Her credits in the *English Journal* include: "Let Found Poetry Help Your Students Find Poetry" (February 1989); "Found Poem Variations" (March 1990); "Taking Off the Mask: Teaching the Recurring Image in Poetry Writing" (November 1990); "Honoring the Writer" (April 1991); "Publishing the Poetry Chapbook: Defining a Public Self" (February 1993); "What Keeps Me Teaching" (September 1997); "Teaching the Holocaust: *Light from the Yellow Star* Leads the Way" (December 1997); and "Teaching Empathy through Ecphrastic Poetry: Entering a Curriculum of Peace" (May 2000). Credits in *New Jersey English Journal* include "Poetic Literacy" (1992).

She is a contributing author to several books for teachers: "Poetry to Engage the Person" *Literature and Life* (NCTE 1990); "Becoming a Teacher Writer: A Story of Renewal" *Teacher as Writer: Entering the Professional Conversation* (NCTE 1992); "Improvisation Technique as an Envoy for Aesthetic Appreciation" *Educational Psychology and Classroom Practice: A Partnership* (Allyn and Bacon 1992). She adapted the classic *Ethan Frome* (Globe Fearon 1994) for basic readers on the high school level.

The poetry of Ms. Gorrell has been published in *English Journal*, *The Rockford Review*, *BlueLINE*, *Footwork: Paterson Literacy Review*, *Getting the Knack: Twenty Poetry Writing*

Exercises, and *Reflections on the Gift of a Watermelon Pickle*, 2nd edition. Ms. Gorrell was the **1992 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year**. She received the **Outstanding English Language Arts Educator Award for 2001** from the New Jersey Council of Teachers of English and the **New Jersey Governor's Award in Arts Education in 2001**. An additional award is the Raritan Valley Community College Holocaust Institute Teacher Award for Holocaust Lesson Plan and publication (April 1998). She has received poetry and teaching grants from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, WWOR A+ *for Kids* Teacher Network and *Business Week* magazine. She was featured in *Redbook* magazine (Spring 1994) when her high school was awarded the "best school" in the state of New Jersey. In 1993, she was honored by the National Endowment for the Humanities Faculty Study Project at County College of Morris for her contribution to the teaching of poetry.

Ms. Gorrell has served on the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation Poetry Advisory Board. She has been commended by the Morris School District Board of Education (1982, 1989, 1991, 1996) for her leadership in the teaching of writing, promoting the Teen Arts Festival, poetry publications and her position as advisor to the award-winning literary magazine, *The Tricorn*, which won NCTE's Highest Award and a Governor's Arts Award in 1997. Her students' poetry has been published in *Getting the Knack: Twenty Poetry Writing Exercises* and *ARTifacts: Kids Respond to a World in Crisis* (student responses to 9/11).

The November 14, 2003, letter on page 99 states that Ms. Gorrell's essay on "The Little Polish Boy" will be included in a book furthering the message of peace through education.



National Council of Teachers of English
1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801-1096
Telephone (217) 328-3870
Fax (217) 328-0977

14 November 2003

Peter L. Fischl
229 – ½ East Cedar Avenue
Burbank, CA 91502-1406

Dear Mr. Fischl:

I'm pleased to inform you that Nancy Gorrell's essay (*English Journal*, May 2000, v. 89, no. 5), which teaches epiphany through your poem, "To the Little Polish Boy Standing with His Arms up," will be published in an edited collection by the National Council of Teachers of English. The collection, entitled *A Curriculum of Peace*, is edited by Virginia Monseu and will be released in 2004.

We gratefully acknowledge your contribution to our effort through your powerful and moving poem about the Holocaust.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Zarina Hock".

Zarina M. Hock, Ph.D.
Director of Book Publications & Senior Editor

ENGLISH Journal

Volume 89 • Number 5 • May 2000



A Curriculum of Peace

Illustration by Michèle Monseau

Lesson Plan

National Council of Teachers of English

Teaching Empathy through Ecphrastic Poetry: Entering a Curriculum of Peace

NANCY GORRELL

The most important thing is . . . I want to help people start to think and to educate themselves and to love each other, so no one ever has to go through what that little Polish boy went through again.

—Peter L. Fischl, Holocaust survivor

Over a half century ago, Nazi guns pointed at children. Today, children point guns at children—in our homes, in our schools, and in our communities. In this context, Peter L. Fischl's simple but eloquent words get to the heart of any curriculum of peace. They challenge us to define the teaching of peace as one of the "most important things" we do, and at the same time, they challenge us to reflect: How can we teach for peace? How can we teach our students to feel compassion and kindness towards their fellow human beings? If we believe as I do that the first step in justifying violence against another

human being is the objectification of that human being into an "other," then it also follows that any curriculum of peace must have at its core the teaching of empathy, "the power to enter into the feeling and spirit of others."¹

But the question still remains: How can we teach, not preach, empathy? How can we empower our students to "enter into" the feeling and spirit of others? One answer lies in a remarkable teaching tool—ecphrastic poetry—and one particular ecphrastic poem of address written by Peter L. Fischl, "To the Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up" (see facing page).

Ecphrastic Poetry: The Poetry of Empathy

Ecphrasis, the poetry I like to think of as the poetry of empathy, is a little known, technical term used by classicists and art historians concerning the long tradition of poetic responses to great works of art. John Hollander, poet and critic, has written a definitive work on the subject, *The Gazer's Spirit: Poems*

Speaking to Silent Works of Art, in which he chronicles the history of ecphrasis from ancient to modern times, including ecphrastic poems in response to sculpture, monuments, and photography. By definition, ecphrastic poetry requires the viewer/poet to "enter into" the spirit and feeling of the subject through a variety of poetic stances: describing, noting, reflecting, or addressing.

I first became acquainted with Fischl's ecphrastic poem of address when he sent it to me in response to reading my article, "Teaching the Holocaust: *Light from the Yellow Star Leads the Way*" (*English Journal*, Dec. 1997). From the moment I first read "To the Little Polish Boy," I knew I had in my hands the companion lesson that would open the door to the teaching of empathy. His poem and personal story, in conjunction with fellow survivor Robert O. Fisch's memoir, *Light from the Yellow Star: A Lesson of Love from the Holocaust*, have become the cornerstone of my teaching of peace, prejudice reduction, and Holocaust and genocide literature ever since. As companion lessons, either



Figure 1. Instytut Pamieci Narodowej/Institute of National Memory, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives. Warsaw, 1943.

To the Little Polish Boy Standing with His Arms Up

by Peter L. Fischl

I would like to be an artist
So I could make a Painting of you
Little Polish Boy

Standing with your Little hat
on your head
The Star of David
on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

I would make a monument of you
and the world who said nothing

I would like to be a composer
so I could write a concerto of you
Little Polish Boy

Standing with your Little hat
on your head
The Star of David
on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

I would write a concerto of you
and the world who said nothing

I am not an artist
But my mind had painted
a painting of you

Ten Million Miles High is the Painting
so the whole universe can see you Now
Little Polish Boy

Standing with your Little hat
on your head
The Star of David
on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

And the World who said nothing

I'll make this painting so bright
that it will blind the eyes
of the world who saw nothing

Ten billion miles high will be the
monument
so the whole universe can remember
of you
Little Polish Boy

Standing with your Little hat
on your head
The Star of David

on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

And the monument will tremble
so the blind world
Now
will know
What fear is in the darkness

The world
Who said nothing

I am not a composer
but I will write a composition
for five trillion trumpets
so it will blast the ear drums
of this world

The world's
Who heard nothing

I
am
Sorry
that
It was you
and
Not me

Poem from the Archives of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los Angeles, California
©1994 Peter L. Fischl.

one may follow the other. I begin with the *Light from the Yellow Star* lesson, followed by the lesson in empathy centering on Fischl's poem of address. Interestingly enough, both survivors, Fischl and Fisch (similarity of names is purely coincidental), grew up in Budapest, Hungary, knew each other at the time, and have remained lifelong friends.

In nearly three decades of teaching English and writing to eleventh and twelfth grade students in a diverse, public high school, I have found no introductory lesson more authentic, relevant, and deeply affecting for both me and my students. In two lessons, one eighty minute block and a follow-up lesson, students produce mature, serious, and empathetic poetry, entering our curriculum of peace.

A Lesson in Empathy

Historical Background to the Photograph

I begin by displaying a large poster reproduction of the roundup of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto (1943) with Fischl's poem printed beneath.² The photograph immediately captures my students' attention, and a brief discussion naturally follows. I tell them that the photograph of the little Polish boy stands as one of the most powerful photographic images of our century—etched forever in the minds of those who first saw it when it was published in *Life Magazine* on November 28, 1960 (106). I mention that the Warsaw ghetto confined nearly half a million Jews and that nearly 45,000 died there in 1941 alone, due to starvation and disease. When, in April 1943, the Nazis attempted to raze the ghetto and deport the remaining 70,000 inhabitants to Treblinka concentration camp, a revolt ensued that lasted five weeks (*The Betrayal of Mankind* 14). I comment that the photograph we are looking at was taken by Nazi photographers for General Jürgen Stroop, a Nazi official, to document the uprising and the final liquidation of the ghetto.³ I ask my students if anyone has seen this well-known photograph, as it has been published in many history textbooks and has been reprinted numerous times in popular literature. Despite its historical significance, few of my students can recall seeing it.

Then I ask my students to imagine for a moment a Holocaust survivor seeing this photograph years after the Holocaust. How do you think that

survivor might feel? Students speculate that the survivor might be shocked, that the image might bring back painful memories, and that the survivor might not even want to look at the photograph at all. I tell my students that this is what happened to a Holocaust survivor, Peter L. Fischl, whom I have come to know.

Peter Fischl's Personal Story

I share with my students the personal story Fischl related to me. Like the boy in the photograph, Fischl was a child growing up during the Holocaust. At the age of thirteen he wore the Star of David on his clothes and was subjected to harsh anti-Jewish laws. Soon after, the Nazis invaded Hungary. Separated from his family, he went into hiding in a Catholic school with sixty other boys. A few months later, he received a phone call from his father telling him that he had been discovered by the Gestapo. That was the last contact he had with his father. Fortunately, Fischl managed to survive the last weeks of the war in hiding with his mother and sister. In 1957, during the Hungarian Revolution, he escaped to America, where he settled in southern California.

After hearing the poem,
my students are visibly moved;
a sense of awe and silence
permeates the room.

Years later, in 1965, he saw the photograph of the little Polish boy by accident, when he was browsing through old *Life* magazines in a bookstore on Hollywood Boulevard near his home. The effect on him was so powerful that the image of the little boy remained with him every day for four years thereafter, until he woke up one morning at 2:00 A.M. and, although he was not a poet, wrote a poem to the little Polish boy.

Peter Fischl's Poem of Address

At this point I place on each student's desk a smaller version of the poster with a copy of the

photograph and the poem printed beneath, and I read the poem aloud as the students follow along.⁴ After hearing the poem, my students are visibly moved; a sense of awe and silence permeates the room. I ask them to take out their response journals and pose the following questions for personal reflection: What are you wondering at this moment? Write a list of "wonder" questions. What are you feeling? Write about your reactions to the poem.

After a few minutes of writing, I share with my students what happened after Fischl wrote his poem. As he related it to me, until the moment of writing, he had never before expressed his feelings about his Holocaust experience. After writing the poem, he cried "for a long time," and then he put it in his desk drawer where it sat for nearly a quarter of a century. He was not a poet, and he never thought to publish the poem for fear it would be exploiting the memory of the little Polish boy. Then one day he went with his daughter to see the opening of Steven Spielberg's film, *Schindler's List*. After seeing the film, he sat frozen to his seat, consumed once again with the image of the little Polish boy. At that moment he knew he had to break his silence, and in 1994 he published his poem in lithograph form, where it is on display in the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance as well as in museums throughout the world.

Student Writing Response: Poems Speaking to the Little Polish Boy Photograph

Without further discussion, I ask my students to turn their attention once again to the photograph before them. I suggest that they write their own poem to the little Polish boy or to anyone in the photograph. Keeping the instructions open and simple, I pose the following questions:

- If you could speak to the little Polish boy, what would you say?
- If you could speak to anyone in the photograph, what would you say?
- If you could imagine any of the subjects speaking, what do you think they would say?
- On a new page in your journals, write any poem reflecting on your viewing of this photograph. You may reread your wonder questions and reflections to help you get started.

In the two years I have been teaching this lesson to students of various ability levels and atti-

tudes towards poetry, I never cease to be amazed at how eagerly students respond. After ten minutes of composing I ask, "Who would like to share their poems in progress?" Sitting in our "sharing circle" format, students readily respond with an array of poetic stances: addressing the subjects, letting the subjects speak, reflecting on the subjects.

At this point in the lesson, I want my students to listen to the power of the poems, "to enter into the spirit" and to reflect upon that spirit. As the students do so, they and their poems reveal mature insights into the nature of genocide, the most extreme form of violence, raising the critical questions so vital for our subsequent study. Since I want my students to process those insights, I ask them to go to a blank page in their journals. I tell them we will listen to the poems without commenting, and after hearing each poem, we will reflect in our journals upon that "hearing." I suggest they write what the poem reveals to them about the nature of violence, genocide, or human behavior, or they may write a wonder question. Without further comment, we proceed around the sharing circle, hearing volunteers who are moved to read, reflecting for a few minutes in our journals after each reading.

Karen "enters the spirit" of the little Polish boy in her poem of address, first describing and then ending with her personal reflection. She reads to us:

To the Little Polish Boy

Looking at you little boy
your arms up in the air
thinking of what you may miss
if one of the demons shoots their guns
ending your already scarred life
looking at you little boy
facing the fear that faces you
how brave you really are . . .
looking at you little boy
seeing the star of David staining your clothes
locked up in this ghetto with nowhere to go
looking at you little boy
and seeing only
how precious
life really is.

What more important lesson can we learn in our study of peace than Karen's last lines leading us to the conclusion of the "precious" value of human life?

Lily addresses the little Polish boy by imagining she is his mother. She takes a speculative stance, reading to us:

Untitled

What if I were your mother
and held you high in the air
in my tall arms
under the warm sun
exalted and kissed by God
on your rosy cheeks,
And the barbed wire and concrete
grayness and cold were a far off
twister of a storm cloud
soon to be swept to sea
never to rain on us
as I hold you high in the air
no pain of a gun piercing your back.

The hearing of this poem poses for us a most provocative question . . . *what if?* . . . prompting us to reflect upon the issue of moral choice: What if? . . . What if we/they choose/chose peace, not violence?

Several students address
poems to the Nazi soldiers
in the photograph.

John assumes a different stance, taking on the identity/persona of the little Polish boy, by letting him speak. John reads to us only four short lines:

Untitled

How did I get here?
Why am I here?
What did I do to deserve this?
How will I . . .

The sudden break in the poem, indicating either the inability to express in words the unthinkable, unknowable horror about to come—*there are no answers*—or the sudden cliffhanger ending of a vibrant young life—*Was the little boy shot at that moment of questioning?*—enables us to enter into the moment with its inexplicable possibilities. In four remarkable lines, John imaginatively enters the “spirit and feeling” of his subject, “*How will I*

_____?” leading us to fill in the blank with our own reflections—*survive?*

Cormisha focuses on the woman in the photograph, letting her address the little Polish boy:

The Woman's Cry

Son, whatever you do keep those hands up.
Soon in time, you will be able to put them down
And let them move freely.
You will be able to play with all the children
again.
But son, whatever you do, keep those hands up.
Soon in time, you won't have to think about danger
or fear.
You will be able to go out at night without crying
your heart out.
But son, whatever you do keep those hands up.
Soon in time, they will see how they hurt my
little boy . . .
The gun toward my son is not necessary,
He is just a child.
Son, whatever you do keep those hands up.
Soon in time, the whole world who kept silent
Will come out and help.

Cormisha imagines the mother not thinking of herself, but only how to help her son survive. The mother's assurances affirm the bonds of family and hope for future survival: “Soon in time, the whole world . . . will come out and help.” Cormisha's poem reminds us of an important aspect of any curriculum of peace: Goodness, love, and bravery must prevail, even in the most violent and inhumane circumstances.

Several students address poems to the Nazi soldiers in the photograph. Many of these poems express anger, others struggle to understand. Jessica addresses the Nazi soldier with a litany of questions:

The Killing Soldier

There you stand with your big bad gun,
There you stand with all the power,
There you stand with your face as a rock.
Don't you care about that boy?
Don't you care about his mother and father?
Don't you care about his other family
and friends?
What did this boy do to you?
Did this boy hurt you?
Maybe you should think
before you pull the trigger.

In contrast to Jessica's poem, Amanda struggles to understand the Nazi soldier's behavior:

Numb
 Ignorance
 It
 befalls
 you
 like
 rain.
 Senses shut down.
 No longer can you hear
 or feel or see.
 SEE the troubled eyes
 the little fingers and
 the tattered clothes.
 They call only to you—
 salvation!
 Senses shut down.
 You cannot cry back
 nor do you want to.
 This Innocence is your enemy.
 Remote controls
 move
 your
 body
 With the switch of a button
 —Your HEART is turned off—

In her poem Amanda offers an explanation for the Nazi soldier's behavior, "ignorance" and "numbness," for how could anyone be so inhumane and yet possess the feelings that make us human?

Closing Discussion

As a final exercise, I ask students to speculate on what all the poems we have heard in the sharing circle have in common. Students wonder why the world remained silent, what happened to the little Polish boy, and "How can people be so cruel?" We list on the board in brainstorm fashion our collective thoughts, feelings, and insights, framing questions for our subsequent study of peace:

- Why did it happen?
- How can human beings be so cruel?
- What is the nature of violence?
- Why did the "world say nothing?"
- What did America know about the Warsaw ghetto and the little Polish boy?
- What is the nature of good and evil?
- Why do some people choose "good" and others "evil"?

In our discussion I tell my students that the most reliable sources to date contend that we do

not know what happened to the little Polish boy; we can only assume that he perished. As far as the question, "Did the world know?" I tell my students about an article recently published in *Newsweek*. In "Word from the Ghetto" *Newsweek* reports that the Polish government-in-exile sent Jan Karski, a courier for the underground resistance, to visit the Warsaw ghetto and other transit camps in Poland. I hold up the March 8, 1999, edition of *Newsweek* with a prominent picture of Karski and the little Polish boy photograph. Karski saw the atrocities and was desperate to tell the world. He did so, but few believed him. When he returned to Washington in June 1943 during the final days of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, he spoke to President Roosevelt. Then I read his words to the class:

A distinction has to be made . . . The Germans persecute my people . . . they want to make us a nation of slaves. With the Jews, it is different. They want to exterminate them . . . Mr. President, I am going back to Poland . . . Everybody will ask me: what did President Roosevelt tell you? What am I to tell them? (47)

I pause for a moment and then ask my students: What do you think President Roosevelt said? What do you think he should have said? After a few responses, I read Roosevelt's answer:

You will tell the leaders that we shall win this war! You will tell them that the guilty ones will be punished. Justice and freedom will prevail. You will tell your nation that they have a friend in this house. (47)

As my students reflect on Roosevelt's words, I mention that Karski was given by the state of Israel its Honorary Citizenship Award as a distinguished rescuer. At this point I introduce the term "righteous gentile," pointing out the many who made the moral choice to work for peace in the face of genocide. I read Karski's own words in the foreword he wrote for a book of portraits and stories of Holocaust survivors and their messages of hope and compassion:

I understand the uniqueness of the Holocaust. I saw it. We cannot let history forget it. The Jews were abandoned by governments, by church hierarchies, and by societal structures. But they were not abandoned by humanity. Thousands upon thousands of individuals, priests and nuns, workers and peasants, educated and simpletons—risked their lives or freedom to help—we cannot let history forget them. (*The Triumphant Spirit* 10)

As class ends, I distribute to my students the *Newsweek* article and Jan Karski's foreword for further reading that evening. I tell them, "If you are satisfied with the poem in your response journal, write a final, edited draft, or, if you are inspired after hearing other students' poems, write a new poem in response to the little Polish boy photograph."

Follow up Lesson: Expanding Our Circle of Empathy

I open the following class period by asking for examples of new or revised poems written in response to the little Polish boy photograph. Without discussion, we hear a few selections. Then I tell my students that the poems we have been studying and writing are a special kind of poetry, ecphrastic poetry, in which the viewer/poet "speaks to" great works of art, sculpture, and photography. I point out that, in that "speaking," the poet "enters into the spirit and feeling of others." I define that "entering" as empathy. At this point I praise my students' extraordinary poems for helping us enter into the spirit and feeling of the little Polish boy, and, by his example, the genocide and Holocaust experience.

Then I tell my students that I want to give them the experience of writing their own poem of address to expand our circle of empathy. In order to do so, I ask them to recall or find a photograph, a work of art, or a monument or piece of sculpture that affected them as profoundly as the little Polish boy affected Peter Fischl. I ask my students to brainstorm any images or photographs that represent for them an important moment or experience they will never forget. Amazingly, Minh-Dang (Mindy), a grandchild of Vietnamese boat refugees, recalls seeing in her history textbook a photograph of a Vietnamese girl running through the streets covered with napalm. I tell her I recall seeing that photograph, too, how it became emblematic of an entire era, and I suggest to her to try to write a poem on viewing that photograph. Other students recall images from the Kennedy assassination they have seen. I tell my students that some images like the little Polish boy, the napalmed young girl, or JFK Jr. saluting the coffin of his assassinated father are so profound that they become part of our collective consciousness, reflecting the feelings of an entire community or nation.

Next, I distribute the writing assignment. (See sidebar.)

Ecphrastic Poetry Writing Assignment General Directions:

Find a photograph, piece of art, monument, or sculpture that profoundly affects or inspires you. *If possible, strive to have this work affect you as the "Little Polish Boy" affected Peter L. Fischl.* You may need to search for some time in libraries, photography books, and newspapers, as well as in your travels to museums, monuments, and memorials. Copy or acquire a copy of the work of art or photograph to display for the class. Your final poetic responses will be due at the completion of the unit. At that time you will present the image/work and your poetic response(s) to the class.

Step One: Find a Work That Affects You Profoundly

Step Two: Write a Poetic Response to That Work

Choose a Poetic Stance:

1. Describe what you see in detail, step by step.
2. Address a subject in the work.
3. Take on the identity/persona of a subject in the work. Imagine what that subject is thinking or about to do. Or, let the subject speak.
4. Reflect upon what you see; meditate upon the moment of viewing.

Step Three: Copy or Acquire a Picture of the Work for Display

Step Four: Present Your Poem to the Class

After discussing the long-range assignment, I take my students to the school library to find images that affect them. They browse through photography and art books as well as magazines, newspapers, and popular literature. I have placed upon a central table collections of some of the most important photographers and photojournalists of our century: Edward Steichen, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Roman Vishniac, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Dorothea Lange, Robert Capra, Gordon Parks, and Brian Lanker, to name a few available in our high school library. My students consult photographic essays of important eras: photography of the Depression, World War II, the Holocaust, Korea, the Civil Rights Movement, and Vietnam, to name a few. Particularly popular collections are Roman Vishniac's *A Vanished World*, the Time/Life collections on each decade, *The Family of Man*, and recent Time/Life books such as *The Mean-*

ing of Life: Reflections in Words and Pictures on Why We are Here.

I give my students several weeks to search for a work that truly inspires and engages them "to enter into the spirit." The results of this researching and reflecting time prove to be highly productive, as students' ecphrastic responses help them to enter, define, and develop a curriculum of peace.

Student Ecphrastic Poems

The poems my students produce from the long-range, follow-up lesson affirm the power of poetry to enable poet and reader alike to "enter the terrain" of human suffering, pain, and grief, expanding the circle of empathy connecting us all. Students respond to a wide range of works: art, sculpture, monuments, and photography. I offer here two examples of ecphrastic responses: one that connects photojournalism of the past to personal, family history and heritage; the other that sees recent photojournalism through the lens of our teaching of empathy.

Minh-Dang (Mindy) chooses to "enter that terrain" as she connects personal, family history in her poem of address to the photographic image of a fleeing, young Vietnamese girl covered with napalm:

Everything Stands Still

I close my eyes
And I hear your screams
You are running from the Devil
Who has taken your Home
Your Family
Your Clothes
And you are crying for me
For my hands and my help
To take away the hurt
And everything stands still . . .

I open my eyes
And sit in the road
As my Friends, my Family
Run past me
I see you fleeing our home
With your arms outstretched
Trying to fly from the fire
Trying to calm the burning
With the tears running down your face
And everything stands still . . .

This morning you played
You sang the songs of our home
And you tasted the fruits of our land

This morning our mother kissed you
Dressed you for the day
Combed the knots from your black hair
This morning you kissed our father
Before he went to the fields
And lost his life.

This afternoon
The screams came from the sky
Spreading tears of Hell
This afternoon our mother screamed
Somewhere where you could not reach her
And you knew you would never hear her voice
again
This afternoon the gods were angry
And they stole your clothes and stung your eyes
Now you run to me.

I open my arms
Ready to embrace you
And shelter you from the pain
Hoping to smooth your hair
Clothe your burning skin
Wipe your tears away
Your screams reach into my heart
How I wish that I could help you
I wish that our hands could meet
And everything stands still . . .

Sister, this morning you kissed the sun
This afternoon it fell from the sky
Your tears haunt me
Your cries echo in time
Just when I almost touch you
When I can almost save you
Everything stands still . . .

You are my nightmare
You are my regret.

Lily chooses to "enter the terrain" as she views a recent photographic image of a skull buried in dirt in a *Time* magazine article on the war in Kosovo.

Morning Coffee, 7:42 A.M.

Today the paper said that
Thousands of bodies were found in
Landfills across Eastern Europe—

This body is half-decayed and blasted,
Hair shot back and half there, exposing
A broken-down skull, lined with cracks and
Footsteps, dirt-stained and parasitic—

I look to see what sex the thing is,
(I smoked too much last night and my lungs
feel tight and raspy, my throat is raw and tastes like

salt, and if I cough real hard I can still taste the tobacco.) and the caption tells me it's female—

Here a sexless, bloodless body shares the page
With a family on a picnic in central park—

Final Reflections

I am not so naive to think that poetry, ecphrastic or any other kind, could possibly "solve" all the problems of violence in our society. The underlying causes of one person's inhumanity to another lie in centuries of practice, prejudice, and paradox unimaginable and unknowable. And yet, I am an English teacher, and I must do what I do best—teach the essence of my discipline. And what is that essence? It has been and always will be for me engagement—imaginatively, aesthetically, and emotionally—with "the text." That engagement, the ability to enter into the spirit and feeling of others, defines what it is to be human, and that, I believe, is the heart of any curriculum of peace.

Students respond to a wide range
of works: art, sculpture,
monuments, and photography.

Lily reveals such engagement when she can no longer drink her morning coffee while turning the pages reflecting horror and tragedy in the magazine before her. I can think of no other weapon more important to combat violence, prejudice, and hatred than the heightened sensitivity of our young people to the plethora of horrific images of inhumanity in the media today.

Without question, the photograph of the little Polish boy and Peter Fischl's response to it have touched the hearts and souls of my students, producing not only mature, serious, and empathetic poetry, but a transformational awareness that is both lifelong and portable.

Hopefully, through the teaching of empathy, our curriculum of peace *will* take us one step closer to the time when, in Fischl's words, "no one will have to go through what that little Polish boy went through again."

Notes

1. *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc. 1989) offers a definition of empathy particularly useful for our purposes: "The power to enter into emotional harmony with a work of art and so derive aesthetic satisfaction; the power to enter into the feeling and spirit of others" [my italics].

2. The "Little Polish Boy" poster (28"H x 18"W), including the photograph and reprinted poem beneath, is available from the *Holocaust Resources and Materials* catalogue, published by the Social Studies School Service, 10200 Jefferson Boulevard, Room J5, P.O. Box 802, Culver City, CA 90232-0802 (1-800-421-4246) (Fax: 1-800-944-5432) catalogue #PFL100-J8; fee \$12. (Includes a French translation of the poem.) The companion resource material, *Light from the Yellow Star: A Lesson of Love from the Holocaust* by Robert O. Fischl, is also available at \$9.95 in the paperback edition, Catalogue #0P136-J8.

3. The photograph of the little Polish boy was first published in *The Report of Jurgen Stroop Concerning the Uprising in the Ghetto of Warsaw and the Liquidation of the Jewish Residential Area*. It is accessible from the Simon Wiesenthal Center library, 9760 W. Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90035. This amazing document, with an introduction by Professor B. Mark, serves as a testimony in the Nazi's own words of Jewish heroism and resistance.

4. Note that the yellow star of David does *not* appear on the coat of the little Polish boy in the original photograph. Fischl takes poetic license and refers to it in the poem, as he, and all Jews, were required to wear the star.

Special Note

Teachers may secure permission free of charge from Holocaust artist Peter L. Fischl to teach his copyrighted poem, "To the Little Polish Boy Standing with His Arms Up," by writing to him at 4397 Gird Avenue, Chino Hills, CA 91709. Please include your name, school address, approximate date of teaching the poem, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your request.

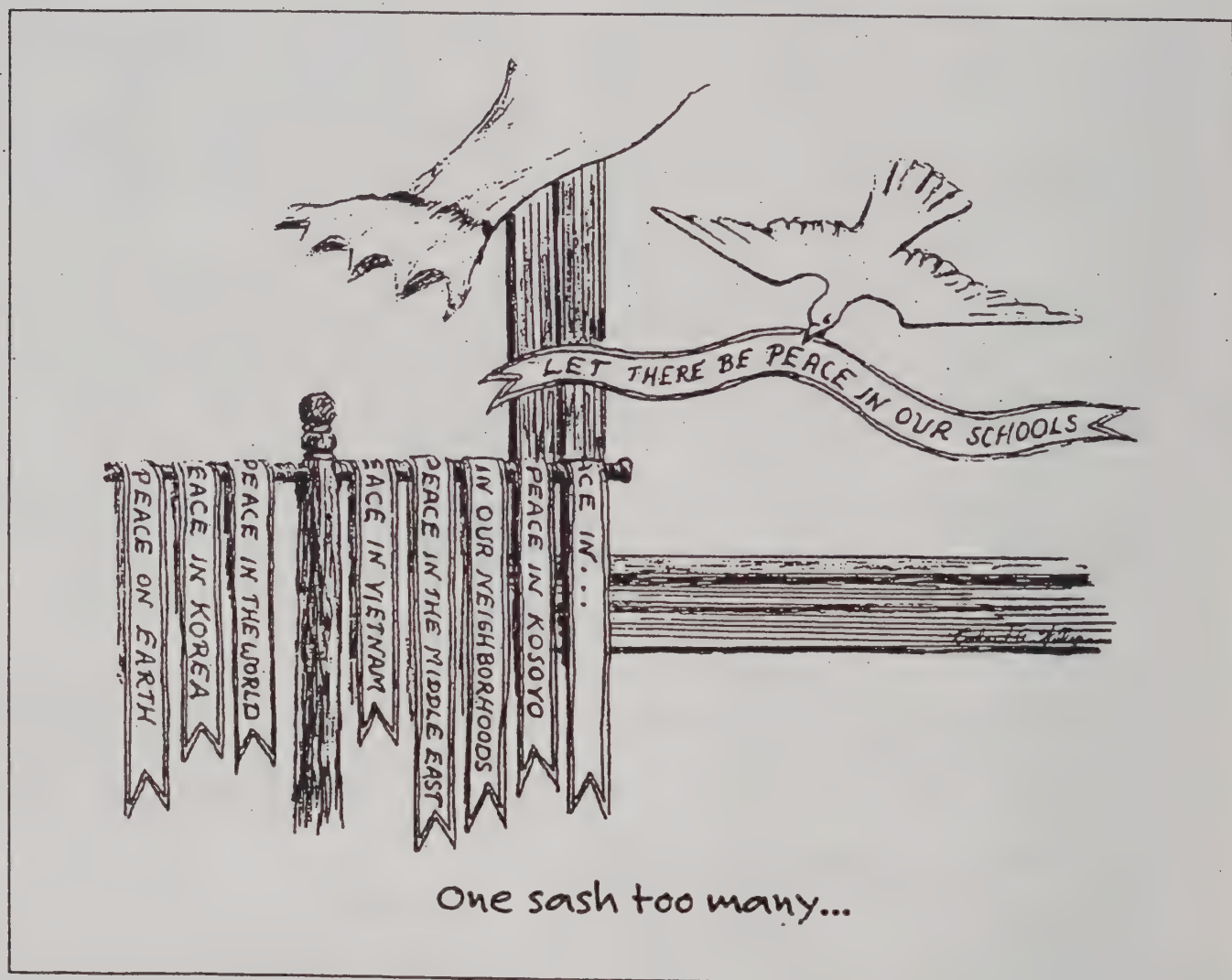
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NANCY GORRELL teaches at Morristown High School, Morristown, New Jersey. She was a 1997 recipient of *English Journal's* Paul and Kate Farmer Award for her article, "Teaching the Holocaust: *Light from the Yellow Star* Leads the Way."



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- 1) Web: <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/FischlPoem.htm>
- 2) E-mail: peterlfishl@hotmail.com
- 3) Telephone or Fax: 909-957-5219

The second high school teacher being introduced in this book is Marcia Behl. An invitation was extended to me by the Holocaust Resource Center of Oklahoma to be the keynote speaker at their April 2001 Holocaust Memorial. This was an unbelievable, most relevant honor for me. This organization also arranged for me to speak at three schools including Ms. Behl's class. I am including comments from her and her students upon their completion of The Little Polish Boy" lesson plan.



Peter, your poem and poster presentation have been an inspiration to me and my students! Your lesson from the Holocaust is one for all people, all ages! Thank you for your incredible contribution to the students who will carry your message so that never again will "the world say nothing!"

**Marcia Behl
Jenks High School
Jenks, Oklahoma
May 11, 2000**

**Student Comments from Mrs. Behl's Holocaust Studies Class
Jenks High School, Oklahoma, 2000
For Peter Fischl**

***"The Little Polish Boy* beautifully recreates an image of need that we, as a human race, have a true void for in some worldly way."**

Francie Jay

"Thank you for sharing not only your story but also the story of *The World Who Said Nothing*. I learned so much from such a simple thought and story. The little Polish boy had a big impact on how I view myself and also others, now looking for when I need to say something. Thanks again for letting us Remember to keep history alive."

Becky Leaman

"I really enjoyed your poem, *To The Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up*. The emotion that the little boy is feeling is so carefully demonstrated in your poem; I can tell that the photo had a huge impact on you because you remember how he felt."

Andrea Hansen

"It's so important that we remember what happened, your testimony helps."

Jef Wagner

"The poster and poem were very symbolic of the Holocaust that plays on all emotion, giving inspiration to become involved."

Sarah Ward

The little Polish boy in the poster looks terrified and confused. A little boy shouldn't have to experience that. I really liked the poem and it is so true about the world who said nothing. I really enjoyed this lesson on the poster boy."

Regan Kelly

“What an impacting poem. I loved the chorus . . . it reinforced his innocence and made him standout. Thank you for remembering him and making him a symbol of an atrocity that can’t be forgotten.”

Karissa Story

“If you don’t stand up, you can never sit down.”

Micah Wahlmeier

“Never again will an innocent boy have guns of hate pointed at his beliefs. We must learn the past so it will never ever be repeated. Never again will innocent people hide in fear. Spread the word! Thank you for your commitment to show the world the Holocaust. It must be heard, so never again people will be persecuted for who they are.”

Stephanie Jaynes

“The Holocaust is not just a story of inhumanity but a story of strength and survival. Your survival and the survival of others, we need to be taught about. We need to be taught tolerance in order to teach it to others. Education is the key to help prevent this tragedy from happening again.”

Heather Palizzi

“*To the Little Polish Boy with His Arms Up* is an incredibly powerful poem which, combined with the photo, reminds the reader of both the horror and the importance of the Holocaust. It offers commentary on those who ignored the plight of the little Polish boy and challenges people to remember the Holocaust and consciously become aware of the prejudice and hatred still occurring today.”

Heather Arnott

“*To The Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up* is a very touching poem. The poem captures all the feelings that are seen in the eyes of the little Polish boy himself. It carried the message of frustration with the bystanders who did nothing to help and passes on hope that people will stand up for what is right if anything like this happens again.”

Nicole Nagelschneider

“The world didn’t listen when it needed to hear the children’s cries. Now the world must hear the consequences of its actions.”

David LaFluer

“The picture of the little Polish boy is probably the most impacting and personally touching photograph produced by the Holocaust. Peter Fischl’s poem paints a picture of the boy and more importantly the spirit of those impacted by the Holocaust.”

Rusty Buck

“Through Peter’s poem I was able to look at the little Polish boy and see what he was seeing and feel what he was feeling. His words truly convey what it seems the Holocaust was and the attitude held by many now in response to what happened.”

Lindsay Justin

“The world who at first saw nothing and said nothing now ‘sees’ the horrors of the Holocaust.”

Gautam Shringapure

“The poem really makes you stop and think about how blind the world was to the Jewish plight.”

Molly Barker

“The little Polish boy symbolizes the innocence of not only the Jews, but especially the children. Never forget.”

Jake Murdock

“It’s sad how one person’s ideals can lead to such drastic consequences. I agree with Micah’s statement.”

Tom Huettner

Dear Mr. Fischl,

First of all, I would like to thank you for the poster. I was so excited to get it because for one thing it is my first autograph. I have seen this picture before but I didn't really know much about the Holocaust at the time. But when I got it again and read the poem, I can't tell you how I felt. It was overwhelming and very emotional, the chorus just chokes me up. Thanks and good luck on your book.

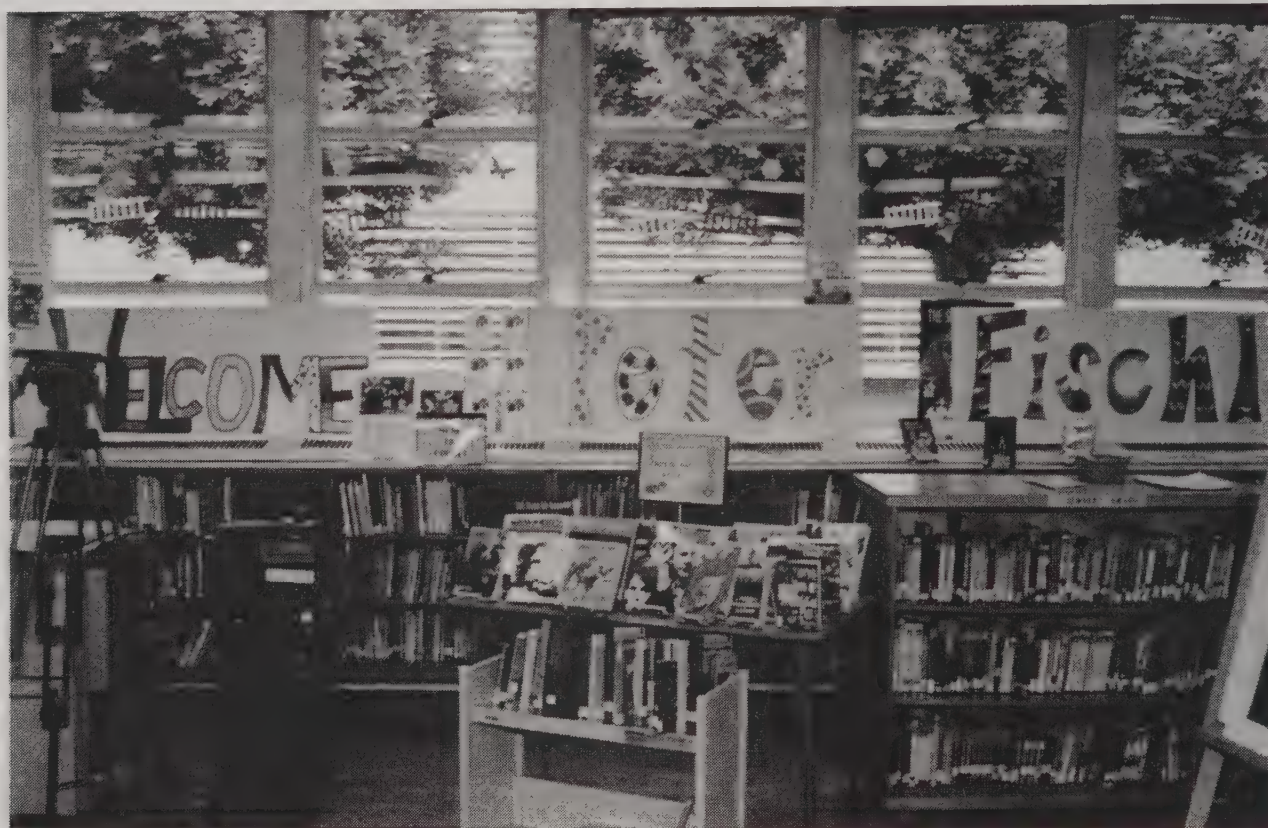
Sincerely,
Fatou Ceesay

Dear Peter Fischl,

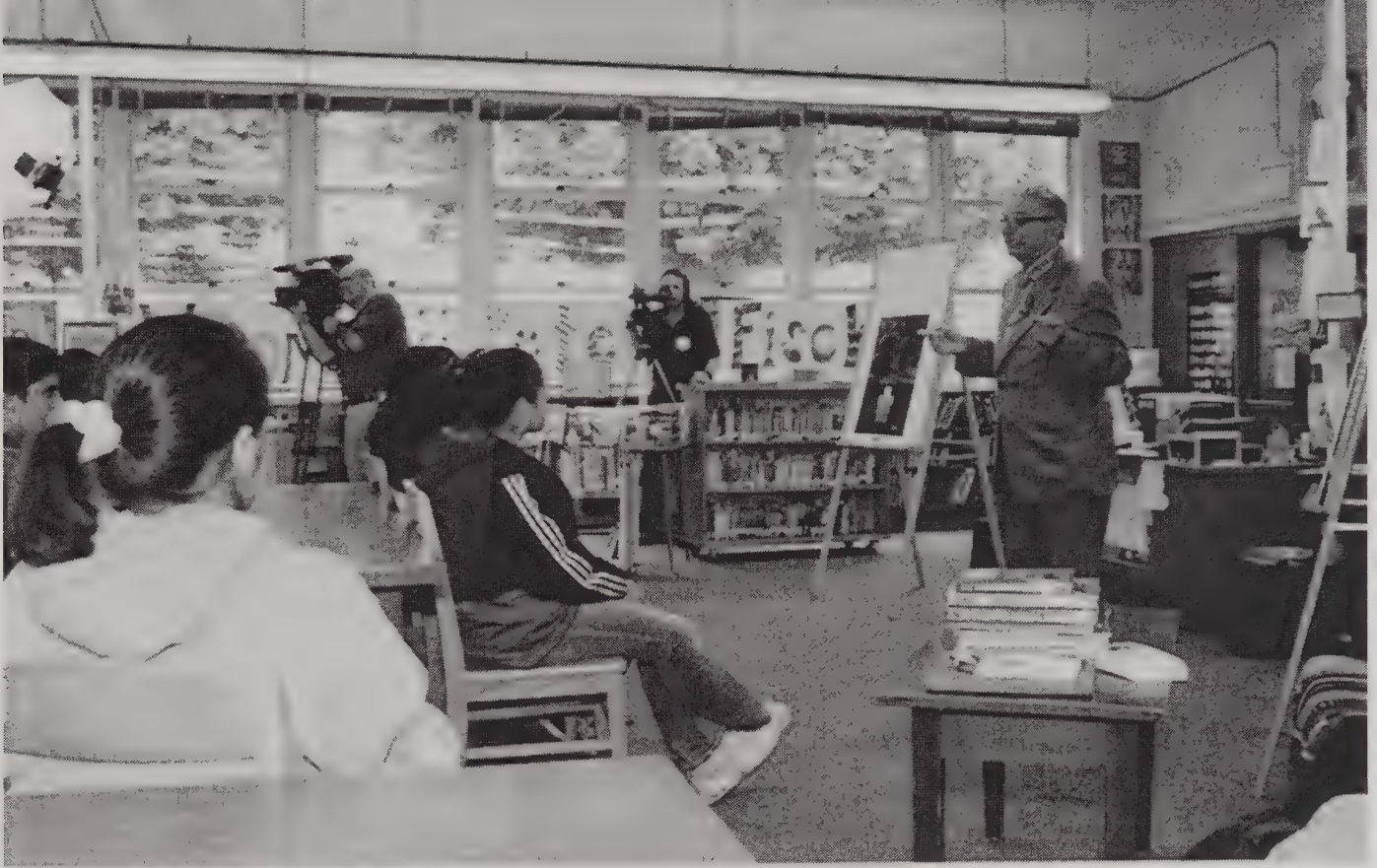
Your contribution and generosity has helped this class and the rest of the world to remember the emotional side of the Holocaust. Your poem does its job well. It used the picture of a little boy as a spring board to express all that did happen and all that could have gone differently if the world had not turned its back in the early and even the later stages of the Holocaust. Many have seen pictures from the Holocaust and/or have read about it, read poems, read survivor stories but your poem and the picture combined present a beautiful duo. Thank you for allowing us to further our Holocaust education with your poem. It is a poem that makes me ask one question of the world . . . Why???? Thank you again for your generosity. Thank you Mr. Fischl!!

Sincerely,
Jamie Ward

* * * * *



Peter Fischl at John Muir Middle School, Burbank, California
April 12, 2002



Peter Fischl lecturing in the library at John Muir Middle School



Peter Fischl and his friend, Ralph McQuarrie, Academy Award Winning Motion Picture Artist at John Muir Middle School.

Peace is his message

**Jewish WWII
survivor preaches
tolerance, not war.**

**By Molly Shore
The Leader**

HILLSIDE DISTRICT — Peter I. Fischl, a World War II Hungarian Jewish survivor, delivers his message of tolerance to anyone who wants to hear it.

Fischl addressed students Wednesday at John Muir Middle School. Speaking quietly and slowly, Fischl, 72, told them of the horrors he lived through when Hitler sent occupying forces into Hungary in 1944.

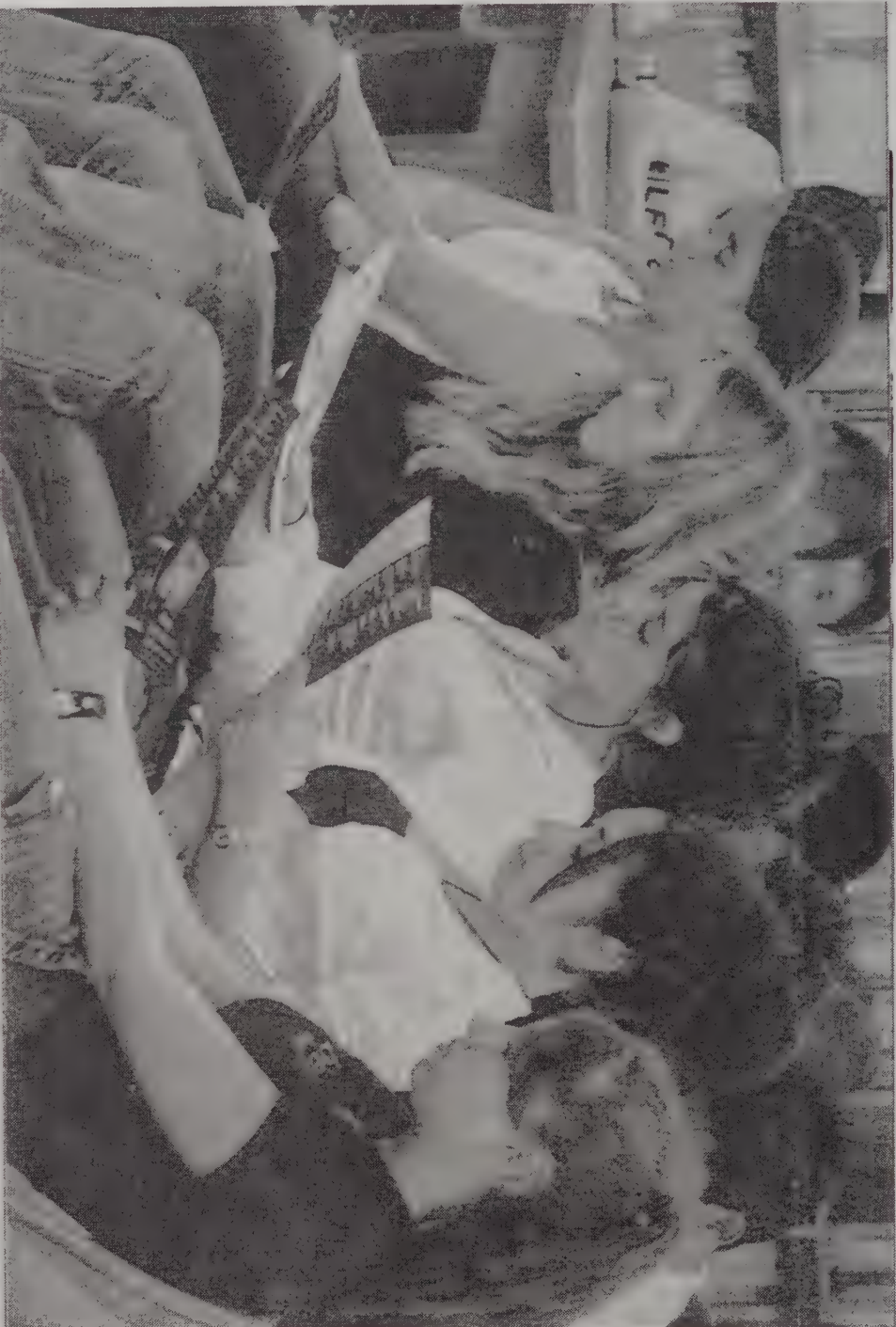
"The German soldiers marching in goose step appeared powerful and impressive," the Burbank resident said, "but they were nothing more than bullies who picked on people who could not fight back."

Fischl said that John Gaal, a Christian man, befriended many Budapest Jewish families who were rounded up by the Nazis and sequestered in a group home that had a large Star of David on the front of the house.

"We should think of him as an example of the kind of people we want to be," Fischl said.

Fischl, his mother and sister went into hiding until the Russians liberated Hungary in 1945. But his father was executed by the Nazis.

Eventually, Fischl immigrated to the United States. In 1965, while leafing through a Life magazine, he came



Students read along while Fischl speaks the words of his poem. He wrote the poem in 1969.

across a photo of a young Jewish boy from the Warsaw ghetto standing with his hands raised as Nazi soldiers held him and others at bay.

"All my miseries and horrors came back when I saw the little Polish boy," Fischl said. "For the next four years, the boy lived with me. I spoke to him and he spoke back to me."

In 1969 Fischl wrote his poem, "To

the Little Polish Boy Standing with His Arms Up." After its publication in 1994, Fischl began his speaking engagements, and he is now one of the subjects of "Keepers of Memory," a documentary in production chronicling the lives of Jewish war survivors.

Eighth-grader Chelsea Shideler said Fischl's talk touched her heart.

"It was a great honor to have him at our school," said Chelsea, 14.

It was important for the school's Armenian students to hear Fischl, since many of their people were killed during the Armenian Genocide, Muir teacher Stacie Crowther said.

"We need to learn about these things so that we don't repeat them," Crowther said.

**Article about Peter Fischl at John Muir Middle School published in the
Burbank Leader, Weekend , March 29-30, 2003**



Peter L. Fischl talks to John Muir Middle School students about the photo from Life magazine that inspired him to write the poem, "To the Little Polish Boy Standing with His Arms Up." Fischl is a Hungarian Jewish survivor of World War II. His father was executed by the Nazis.

PHOTOS BY SCOTT ROBY / THE LEADER

Picture and caption of the March 29-30, 2003, *Burbank Leader* article

In addition, my poem is being incorporated into Holocaust curriculums in universities in the United States and throughout the world. I'm especially honored that Sir Martin Gilbert, an Oxford University history professor who wrote Winston Churchill's biography, has used my poem in a Master's Holocaust class at the University of London.

At the end of this chapter are letters from other high schools, universities, and Holocaust Centers who are using my materials, some of which I have visited.

* * * * *

In April of 2002, I was awarded the "Hero in Education Award" by the California State Lottery. My daughter, Cathy, was with me to receive the award which was presented by Actor Michael Gross. It was a special time for me as it was for my daughter, Cathy, who originally told me, "Daddy, let's go and see *Schindler's List*." Seeing the magnificent work of art, the powerfully moving film, is what motivated me to publish my poem.

Thank you for the California Lotto, May 18, 2002,

“Hero in Education Award”

presented on the “Big Spin” television show.



Peter receiving the “Hero in Education Award.”

California Lotto’s “The Big Spin.”

From left to right: Host Pat Finn, Maiquel Alejo, Peter Fischl and world-famous actor Michael Gross.

I'm honored that the Social Studies School Service of the United States located in Culver City, California, selected my poem to be put into their catalogs. It is the biggest educational catalog house in the United States. Through their efforts and the Museum of Tolerance and other museum shops, I now have the Little Polish Boy in several thousand schools in the United States. In my estimation, about 50,000 people have read my poem.

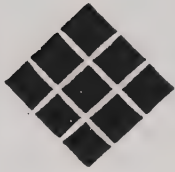
Contact Peter Fischl
By Phone or Fax
909/957-5219

The *English Journal* article by Nancy Gorrell on how to teach the "Little Polish Boy" in Holocaust education is available in this book and on the website below.

A television movie made by the City of Burbank titled *Peter L. Fischl, Holocaust Survivor*, is an excellent tool to introduce Peter Fischl and his Holocaust teaching.

Contact Peter:

- 1) Web: <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/FischlPoem.htm>
- 2) E-mail: peterlfishl@hotmail.com
- 3) Telephone or Fax: 909-957-5219



THE LOS ANGELES CITY COLLEGE

UPWARD BOUND

855 N. VERMONT AVENUE • L.A., CA 90029 • (213) 953-4501 • FAX (213) 953-4500

Mr. Peter Fischl
229 1/2 East Cedar
Burbank, CA 91502-1406
July 17, 1997

Dear Peter:

Please accept my deep regard for your warmth and willingness to share such an important part of your life with us. Your giving nature is evident whenever you speak and whenever you mention such willingness to involvement yourself with the lives of others. Our children in this community (and throughout the world because of your poem) are fortunate to be given such a wonderful gift.

My best wishes to you. Your energy and commitment are an inspiration to me, personally. May the ears of all who listen to you be wide open.

Sincerely,

Fred Fate, Project Director
Upward Bound/LACC

Upward Bound is a Federal program being administered by Los Angeles City College and its Theatre Academy

Garfield High School

5101 E. SIXTH STREET, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90022

TELEPHONE: (213) 268-9361 • FAX: (213) 268-4957

ANTONIO GARCIA
Principal

15 September 1997

Peter Fischl
229 1/2 East Cedar Avenue
Burbank, CA 91502

Dear Peter,

On behalf of my students and I, I would like to thank you for coming to Garfield High School and sharing your moving testimonies with us. Not only did you touch my life personally, some of the students still ask about you.

The reading of your poem prompted many of the students to write their own poems about the Holocaust. You are a true inspiration to those around you and I really appreciate the fact you took out time to come and see us.

Thank you for the signed poster. I have displayed it in my classroom for the students to see. You are welcome to visit my classes again in the future.

Please continue to spread the truth about the Holocaust and tear down the walls of ignorance.

Wishing you further success-

Sincerely,



Lori A. Bartell, English Teacher
Garfield High School



BURBANK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

1900 WEST OLIVE AVENUE
BURBANK, CALIFORNIA 91506-2460
TELEPHONE (818) 729-4455 • FAX (818) 729-4402

May 15, 2000

Dear Peter Fischl:

On behalf of the Burbank Unified School District, we thank you for the moving presentation that you made to our students. It was very important and useful for the students to hear your story. Sometimes history is hard for our students to place in the context of the world in which they live. What is truth and fiction sometimes gets lost. Your story was compelling and important to hear. You brought history alive and showed the students that what they read in their history books and literature has a human face.

We realize that it may be very difficult for you to share the experiences that you endured in your youth. It takes great courage to again face the horror that you experienced by relating the events to our students. We can assure you that the students were deeply moved by having you share with them the intimate details of your horror. As people try to rewrite history, it is even more important that your story is told. The experience of listening to you has helped many students understand the inhumanity that mortals are capable of inflicting on their fellow humans. You are a teacher, for you have helped students to see the truth.

We hope that you will be able to participate in the Holocaust Assembly program again in 2001. With your permission, next year we would like to videotape your presentation. Thank you again for your participation this year.

With deepest appreciation for you and those that did not survive, we remain committed to teaching our students about the holocaust!

Sincerely yours,

Ted Bunch
Program Director

Tina Cantrell
Directory of Secondary
Education

Jim Garrett
Program Director Emeritus

October 7, 2002

Peter L. Fischl
229 ½ E. Cedar Avenue
Burbank, CA 91502-1406

Dear Mr. Fischl,

I'm sorry it has taken so long to return to you with my thoughts, but, as you know, I've been mending for some weeks. I really am beginning to feel better—and now have the energy to take care of some of the tasks I've neglected.

One of the things I was able to do was to watch the tapes you sent and read the materials. I can tell you that I had tears in my eyes much of the time. I have spoken to many Holocaust survivors and been moved by their words. But your story is unique and so well presented. The expression of your feelings and thoughts makes this historical event real and unforgettable. It helps the reader and viewer share the experience.

As a teacher of literature for some 40 years, I know the power of fine writing to move and change those who experience it. I thank you for the expression of your experience, an expression that can change the way people think about the Holocaust and the issues that arise from it.

A friend of mine teaches at the Talmud Torah School in Minneapolis, and he is interested in using the materials there. I have contact with other schools, and I am going to propose the use of these materials to teach the Holocaust and related studies.

I am enclosing the materials I mentioned on the phone—a copy of *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, a copy of *No Fading Star*, articles that will give you some background on the history of the play. And you'll learn a little bit about me too!

Thank you again for the generous sharing of your experience in so excellent a form. It is important to keep the history of the Holocaust alive so that future generations will know that it did happen—and that it must not happen again.

Sincerely,



Celeste R. Raspanti
raspanti@mninter.net

May 3, 1999

Mr. Peter L. Fischl
229-1/2 East Cedar Avenue
Burbank CA 91502-1406

Dear Peter:

Thank you so much for the posters with the famous picture of the child in the ghetto with his hands held up in fear, and your most powerful poem.

I have used this poster in three of my university classes and I know that a number of other faculty at the university have done likewise.

We find that this poster and the reading of your poem have always led to meaningful questions and a long discussion of the Holocaust, what it has meant to the Jewish people, to the Christians and in point of fact, to all people of conscience understanding what happened then and how it is affecting our world today.

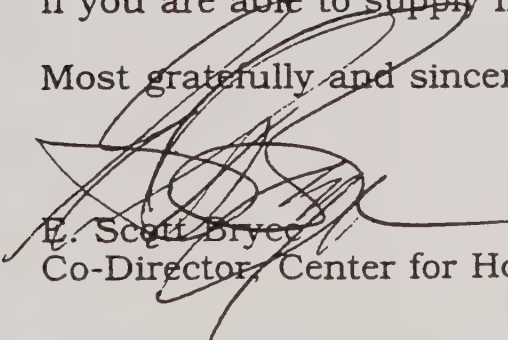
Besides our university use, we have provided a number of middle and high school teachers with the posters and though the student questions may be less sophisticated, they are just as meaningful and important to their lives.

We cannot thank you enough for your significant creative and moving work. It does make a difference in the lives of these young people.

We are beginning to run low on our supply and would appreciate another 20 or so for which we would be happy to pay.

If you are able to supply more, please include an invoice with them.

Most gratefully and sincerely,



E. Scott Bryce
Co-Director, Center for Holocaust Education

SIR MARTIN GILBERT

36 PARLIAMENT HILL
LONDON NW3 2TN

16 November 1996

Dear Peter Fischl,

Thank you so much for your letter, and for the enclosures. I was most interested in all that you wrote, about your own work, and about that of your friend Dr Fisch.

Certainly I would be glad to make your materials available to the Holocaust MA class at University College, London, where I taught last academic year, and with whom I am still in touch.

I appreciate your thought in writing to me, and your offer of the materials for display in the department, perhaps in the departmental library. They will be much valued.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Gilbert

no from 36 Parliament Hill

London N.W. 3. 2.T.N.

9 January 1977

Dear Peter Fischl,

I am just writing to thank you
once more for your joint and great generosity.
I will be back at my desk later today
(I am in flight between Tel Aviv and London)
and will prepare your wonderful materials
for U.C.L. tomorrow. I really do appreciate
what you and Robert Fisch have done — and
I know that the pupils will also do so.
with further thanks.

Yours most sincerely,

Anthony Gilbert

April 6, 1997

Peter Fischl
229 1/2 East Cedar Avenue
Burbank, CA 91502

Dear Mr. Fischl,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Holocaust Center of Northern California, thank you for your generous donation of the signed copies of your poem "To The Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up" and the book *Light From the Yellow Star* by Robert Fisch.

Through the support of people like yourself, the Holocaust Center has developed one of the largest publicly accessible libraries of Holocaust-related books, periodicals, documents, photographs and videos in the United States. The Center now has 12,500 books, 2,000 pamphlets, 500 Holocaust oral histories and 200 movies and documentaries. The Center's archive holds some 2,500 documents, original photographs and other rare artifacts from the Holocaust era.

These materials are used by scholars, college professors, teachers, authors, family members conducting genealogical research, students and others.

Your contribution helps the Center to fulfill the mission of the survivors who founded it, to research, document and teach future generations about this tragic period in history.

Appreciatively,

Barbara Goodman

Barbara Goodman
Executive Director

Library: (415)751-6040
Education: (415)751-6041
Fax: (415)751-6735

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Holocaust Survivor

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Office of the President

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December 1, 1998

Peter L. Fischl
229-1/2 East Cedar Avenue
Burbank, California 91502-1406

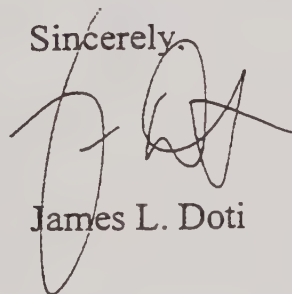
Dear Mr. Fischl:

Thank you for your very thoughtful letter. It is an honor to receive such a beautiful, signed original of your poem and to read of the wonderful recognition and accolades your work has received.

Professor Harran told me about your recent telephone conversation and your generous offer to benefit Christoph Meili's attendance at Chapman. I know that both she and Mr. Elperin were touched, as I am, by your sincere care and concern for Christoph.

I look forward to an opportunity to meet you in the future. In the meantime, please know of my heartfelt gratitude for your special kindness to Christoph and to Chapman.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James L. Doti', with a large, stylized initial 'J' and 'D'.

James L. Doti



FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

777 Glades Road
PO Box 3091
Boca Raton, FL 33431-0991

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
HOLOCAUST OUTREACH CENTER
DR. ROSE GATENS, DIRECTOR
(561) 297-3564
FAX (561) 297-3613

RGATENS@FAU.EDU

JULY 29, 2003

Mr. Peter Fischl
229 ½ East Cedar Avenue
Burbank, CA 91502-1406

Dear Peter,

I am so grateful that you shared your book, the video and the CD-ROMs with me. The whole package shows why you have had such an important influence on the young people with whom you have spoken.

What moved and impressed me most were your autobiography and your poem. I am certain, since these two pieces speak through the voice of a child and young adolescent, that students not only learn about the Holocaust, but even more important, life-lessons that will become part of their own moral imagination. Let me explain what I mean. Each paragraph of your autobiography focuses on a lesson that you learned as a young boy that helped you survive the horrors of the Holocaust—the attitude of never giving up, the belief that injustice requires not only sympathy, but action on behalf of the suffering person or animal, the attitude of thankfulness toward those who helped you and your family and the belief that one be a helpful person oneself, the emphasis on taking responsibility for your own life and your own fate, no matter what. These are all lessons that young people need to learn and which they learn best through the stories and examples of people like yourself who care enough to share their experiences and to encourage youngsters to keep trying.

The child psychologist Robert Cole wrote an essay about a young girl named Ruby who integrated an all-white school in the 1950s. He was very interested in why she was willing and especially how she was able to tolerate the abusiveness of white people opposed to her presence in the new school. She replied that the stories of courage in her family, passed along by her grandparents and parents sustained her the most. She remembered their words and phrases about justice, about struggle, about faith and these got her through the most frightening and difficult moments. I think your story and especially, the way that you tell it, emphasizing these important life-lessons, encourages students to transcend their helplessness as victims and to have the courage to act on their own behalf and that of others. In the end, I believe, these stories are essential to building a social foundation that upholds the dignity of all people regardless of differences in religion, ethnicity, gender, nationality.

I was also impressed by your explanation of how your poem about the little Polish boy helped you to acknowledge and come to terms with your grief about your father and your lost childhood. Because so many families treat death as something from which to shield children, many of us do not learn how to grieve and especially how to recover from truly profound grief.

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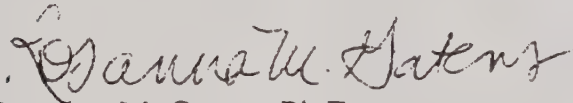
Fischl
July 29, 2003
Page 2

Your poem and the story behind it must surely make an indelible impression on youngsters, especially those who are already suffering from the loss of a loved one or a safe home.

With your permission, I will add the copies of your book to our resource library and encourage teachers to read it to their students. I would also like to buy several hundred copies of the postcards from you so that teachers may give them to their students. All I need from you is an invoice in order to submit to our controller for payment.

Thank you so very much for the unexpected opportunity to get to know you and your powerful story.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Rosanna M. Gatens".

Rosanna M. Gatens, Ph.D.
Director, Holocaust Outreach Center

**“THE MEMORIALIZATION OF THE HOLOCAUST IS
IMPORTANT, NOT ONLY AS A TRIBUTE TO THE VICTIMS
OF THE WORLD’S GREATEST CRIME, BUT ALSO AS A
WARNING TO THE DANGERS OF BIGOTRY
WHICH ARE YET TO BE OVERCOME.”**

**-- Aaron Breitbart
Sr. Research Associate
Simon Wiesenthal Center,
December 29, 1994**

It is satisfying to know that “The Little Polish Boy” is receiving recognition. It amazes me that people from so many walks of life are now acknowledging him, which in turn, causes victims of all crimes against humanity to be recognized. Those shared in this chapter include Aaron Breitbart of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Senator Edward Kennedy, Marriage and Family Therapist and author Marie-Eve Kielson, The Conejo Jewish Academy, and Monsignor Pedro Lopez Quintana of the Vatican.

Since 1999, I have been employed by Pinkerton as a security guard. In 2002, they assigned me as a guard for the Metrolink in Los Angeles. My split schedule allows me to speak to schools and respond to requests for the poem in the middle of the day. In 2003, the Metrolink’s External Communication Department printed and continues to distribute a brochure about “The Little Polish Boy,” myself, and my family. The *Daily News* published an article in October 29, 2002, about my position at the Metrolink and my poem.

University of Southern California Professor Kalman Gabor is making a motion picture on the *Hidden Children*. He has included me in this endeavor.

The City of Burbank made a television movie entitled *Peter L. Fischl, Holocaust Survivor*. Peter Musurlian, Manager of Channel 6 TV, did an excellent job through his tireless efforts, genuine interest, and personal support. This 30-minute film is also a video being used to introduce me in Holocaust classes.



Peter Musurlian (right) with Peter Fischl



Rabbi Marvin Hier
Founder and Dean

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December 29, 1994

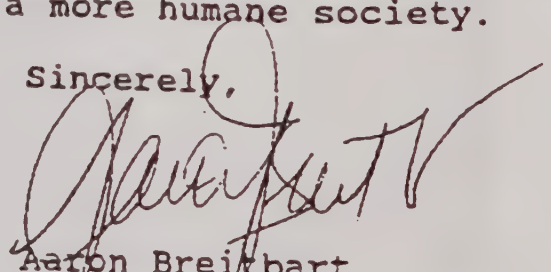
Peter Fischl
229 1/2 E. Cedar
Burbank, CA 91502

Dear Mr. Fischl:

This letter is to acknowledge receipt of and to thank you for taking the trouble to mail us copies of the December 18 - 24, 1994 issue of "Glendale/Foothills." You might be interested to know that there are several survivors who claim to be the boy in the famous Warsaw Ghetto picture. Of them, two seem to have strong support to back up their claims, one in England, the other in Israel. Obviously, both cannot be the same boy, nor is there absolute proof that either is. In any case, their names and addresses have not been released for reasons of privacy.

The memorialization of the Holocaust is important, not only as a tribute to the victims of the world's greatest crime, but also as a warning to the dangers of bigotry, which are yet to be overcome. Your work is a welcome contribution in the battle for memory and a more humane society.

Sincerely,


Aaron Breitbart
Senior Research Associate

AB:vjb

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 11, 1996

Peter Fischl
229 1/2 East Cedar Avenue
Burbank, CA 91502

Dear Peter,

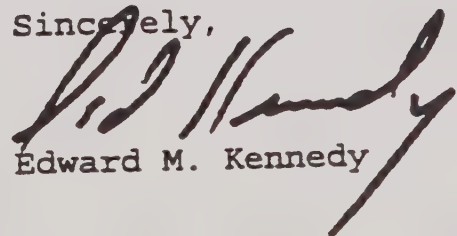
Thank you so much for sending me the materials. I found your poem and Dr. Fisch's artwork incredibly inspiring. I would like to congratulate you both on your tremendous work.

I also thank you for volunteering to join me in the fight against religious bigotry. It seems to me that you have already done a great deal to help our crusade by using your art as a tool by which you can boost awareness about the great amount of hatred which continues to persist today. I commend you for the great work you have already accomplished.

I can only suggest that you continue your grass-roots effort to curb the ongoing problem of religious bigotry. Anything you can do to help the cause, whether it through your artwork, through speeches, or through some other form of community activism, is needed. We can never give up in this fight, for the ultimate goal is far too important.

Again thank you for sending me your works of art. Please pass my warmest regards on to Dr. Fisch. I wish you both good luck in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ed Kennedy", with a long, sweeping flourish extending from the bottom right.

Edward M. Kennedy

June 29, 1997

Dear Peter.

Thank You, Most profoundly, for sending me
Your tribute To The Little Polish Boy. My words
are quite inadequate to convey The multitude
of emotion which were experienced in
reading Your words and being brought to
The impact through The image in front of
me.

As a psychotherapist, I have been honored
to hear The stories of survival, betrayal,
fear, anguish, desire and will to
dream The dreams. Your story, in all its
power and significance has been able
to affirm others. The courage to come
forward and to have "given birth"
to what lay deep inside of you
has finally found its "rightful" place.
May I encourage you to go forward

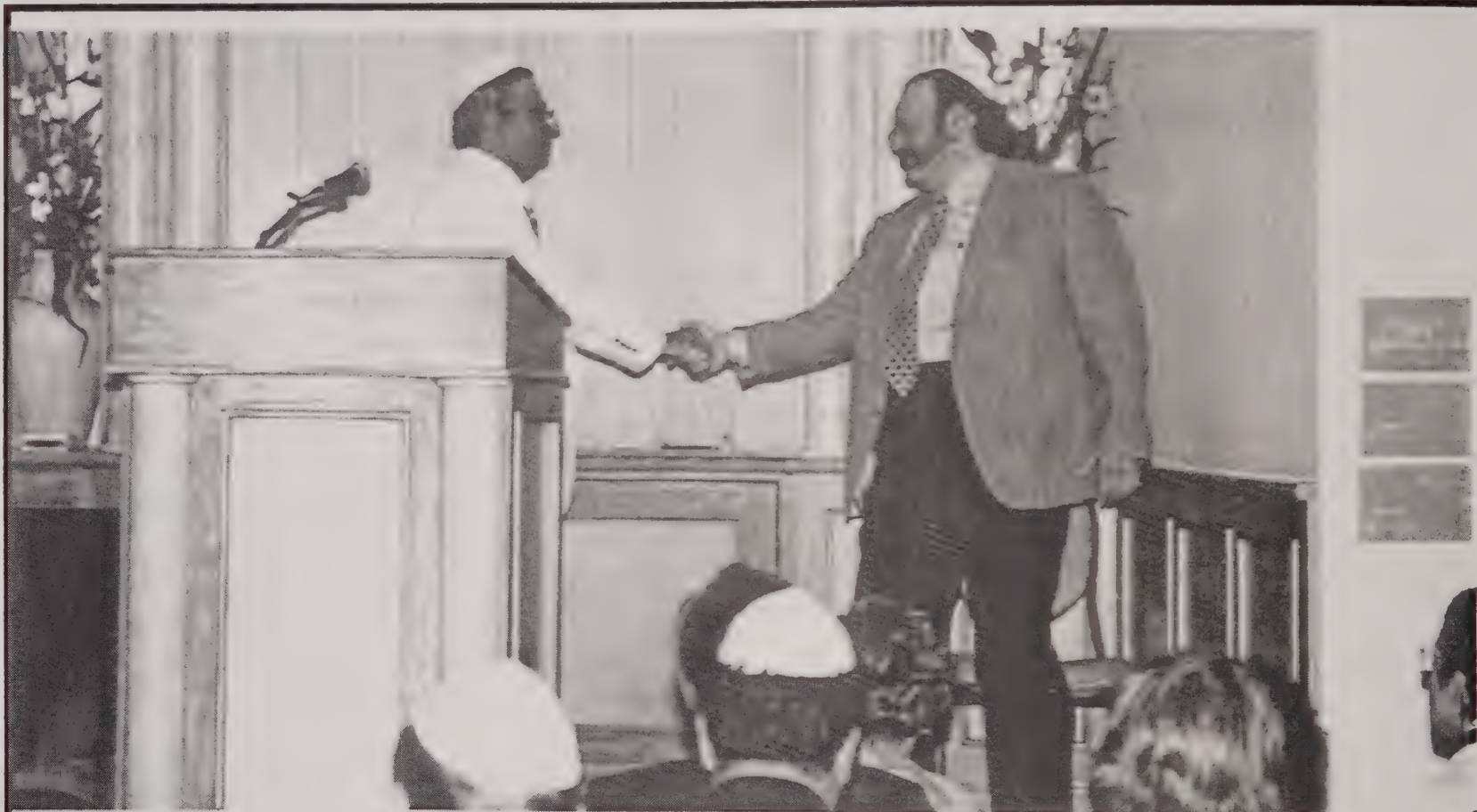
- to The expression of your creativity, so
that the world, large and small, can
continue - to benefit from your
truth.

Thank you again Peter, for entrusting
me with the words which have
touched my heart -

Most respectfully,

Mavis - Ek

FAITH



Tom Dobyys/The Acorn

THE CONEJO JEWISH ACADEMY recently hosted a "Yom Hashoah Memorial Lecture" delivered by Judge Bruce J. Einhorn. The lecture was entitled, "The Holocaust: Concentric Circles of Evil." Judge Einhorn is the Pacific Southwest Region Vice President of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith. Above, poet Peter Fischl welcomes Einhorn to the podium after reading a special poem for the occasion. Fischl, a "Hidden Child" during the Holocaust, also presented Einhorn with a framed copy of the poetry.

Burbank poet recognized by pope

■ Author's verse about Holocaust is displayed in Museum of Tolerance.

By James Winburn, *The Leader*

BURBANK — Some scars never heal but instead serve as reminders of humanity gone awry.

Burbank resident Peter L. Fischl revealed his scars from World War II in the form of an emotional poem about the Holocaust he published in 1994.

Since that time, Fischl's poem has been read by people the world over, a list that now includes Pope John Paul II.

Earlier this year, Fischl sent a copy of his poem to the pope and was pleased to receive a response from the Vatican's assessor, Monsignor Pedro Lopez Quintana. The Oct. 22 letter states in part, "His Holiness wishes you to know that he appreciates the sentiments which prompted you to share your poem with him. He invokes upon you abundant divine blessings."

The 68-year-old Fischl's "To the Little Polish Boy, Standing With His Arms Up," was inspired by a photo in a 1960 issue of *Life* magazine. The 1943 photo showed a young boy holding up his hands as Jews were being rounded up by German soldiers in the Warsaw ghetto.

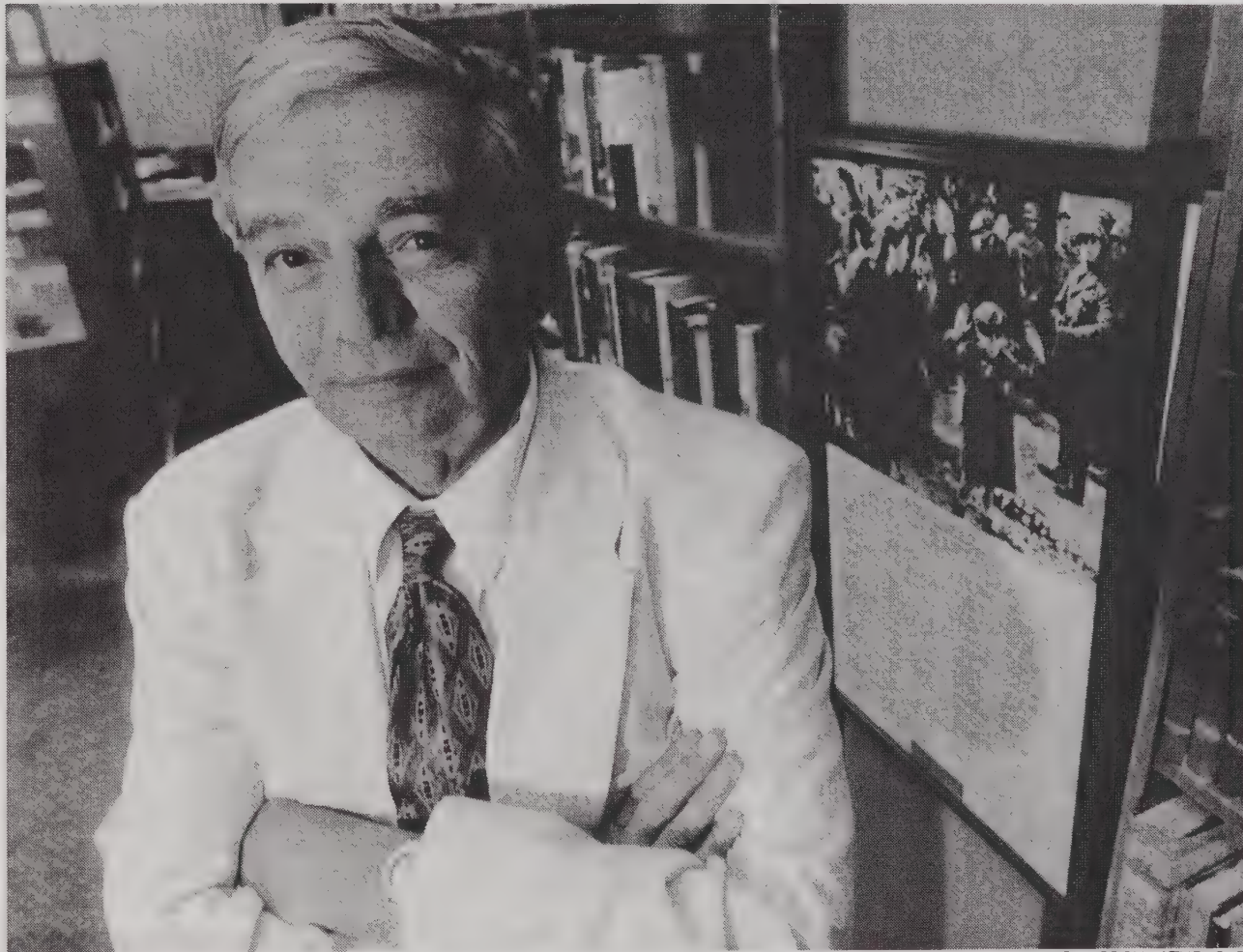
A poster of the photo with Fischl's poem hangs at the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance and at other museums around the world. Written in English, it has been translated into German, Polish, French and Hungarian.

Fischl said he called upon his experience of the Nazi occupation of his native Hungary during World War II to write the poem. His father was killed by Germans when he was 14 and Fischl spent part of his childhood in hiding.

"I don't know if people will benefit from my poetry, but I'm concerned about the universal message that is to be gained from it," said Fischl. "And that has been my calling."

Fischl's daughter, Cathy, 23, said she always expected her father's poem to reach a wide audience.

"I feel wonderful my father



Peter Fischl stands next to a framed copy of the poem he wrote titled "To the Little Polish Boy Standing with his Arms Up." Fischl recently received a response from the Vatican after sending a copy of his poem to Pope John Paul II.

TEXT OF THE VATICAN LETTER

From the Vatican, Oct. 22, 1998

Dear Mr. Fischl,
His Holiness Pope John Paul II has received your further letter and he has directed me to reply in his name.

His Holiness wishes you to

know that he appreciates the sentiments which prompted you to share your poem with him. He invokes upon you abundant divine blessings.

Sincerely yours,
Monsignor Pedro Lopez Quintana
Assessor

FROM THE POEM

EXCERPT

From Peter L. Fischl's "To the Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up:"
Standing with your little hat
on your head
the Star of David
on your coat

Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

I would make a monument
of you and the world who said
nothing

had the opportunity to correspond with the pope," said Fischl, of Boyle Heights. "I had faith

the pope would write back to my dad to recognize his achievements."

Daily News

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2002



Peter Fischl, 72, who grew up in Budapest, Hungary, and is a Holocaust survivor, drew his inspiration for his poem "To The Little Polish Boy Standing with his Arms Up" from the photograph at left, which appeared in the October 1965 issue of Life magazine with the caption: "Roundup of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto (1943)." "The picture brought back all the memories of hiding, all the nightmares and horror," said Fischl, now a Pinkerton guard at the Burbank Metrolink station.



Photographer - Schmid - Maybach

Poem about Holocaust victim makes you stop in your tracks

BURBANK The Metrolink passengers hurried past the Pinkerton security guard patrolling the platform of the Burbank train station Monday. A few of them nodded to Peter Fischl, but none stopped to talk.

They had a train to catch, a job to get to. They didn't have time to spend reminiscing with a 72-year-old security guard.

It's a shame because there's probably no one more important or interesting they will meet that day. Or week. Or month.

Fischl had some time between trains so he talked about the first time he saw the young boy who came to dominate his life.

The little Polish boy holding his arms up, head-high.

It was at a bookstore on Hollywood Boulevard — on Page 101 of the October 1965 issue of Life magazine. The caption on the photograph read, "Roundup of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto (1943)."

Fischl, one of the hidden children of the Holocaust, froze when he saw the picture. It could have been him standing there. He couldn't take his eyes off the scared, little boy in the short pants, his dirty knees showing.

The boy standing so afraid, with the Nazi holding a gun to his back.

"The picture brought back all the memories of hiding, all the nightmares and horror," the security guard said, waiting for the next Metrolink train to arrive.

"I left the bookstore that day and came back to the Glendale house where I was living. And for the next four years there wasn't a day I didn't have the image of that little boy in my mind.

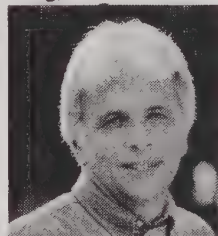
"He wouldn't let me go," Fischl said. "I spoke to him and he spoke to me. One morning at 2 a.m., I woke up and saw his image standing in the middle of my living room with his arms up.

"There was a piece of paper in my typewriter on the coffee table. I sat down and

started writing a letter to him."

It took him all day and all night. And when he was done, Peter Fischl wiped the tears from his eyes, and decided to add one more line:

"I am sorry that it was you and not me."



DENNIS MCCARTHY

Then he put the letter that had turned into a moving, powerful poem in his desk drawer, where it stayed for 25 years.

That night, Fischl went to sleep dreaming of the nuns who had hidden his mother and sisters from the Nazis, and the priests who had hidden him in the cellar of their church in Budapest with dozens of other Polish children.

Dreamed of the last time he heard his father's voice — on a telephone call to the church to tell his son the Germans had just surrounded the ambulance station where he worked, and they were taking people away.

"He wanted to tell me he loved me," Fischl said. "To this day, I don't know where the Germans took him, or how he died."

It wasn't until 1993, when he went to see the movie "Schindler's List" with his daughter, Cathy, that Fischl took his poem out of the drawer.

"After I saw the movie, I couldn't move from my seat," he said. "I told my daughter, We're going home, I have to publish my poem."

He called up a friend, Ralph McQuarrie, a conceptual artist who worked with director George Lucas on the "Star Wars" films and who won an Academy Award for the movie "Cocoon."

"When I read it I thought it was the most honest, sincere, heartfelt thing I had ever read about the Holocaust, so I volunteered to help Peter get it published," McQuarrie said Monday from his home in Northern California.

By 1994, Fischl's poem, "To The Little Polish Boy Standing with his Arms Up" — was selling out at the Simon

Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance bookstore in Los Angeles, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Even Steven Spielberg wrote him a personal letter in 1995, saying he was honored that "Schindler's List" moved him to publish this powerful, soulful poem.

"Life's picture of the little Polish boy with his arms up is an indelible image, one I've never forgotten," Spielberg wrote. "Thank you for giving us the greatest gift — your testimony for our archive."

□ □ □

He works a split shift as a security guard at the Burbank Metrolink station — 6-9:30 a.m., then 5-9:30 p.m.

It's a low-paying job, Fischl says, but with his Social Security check from working 30 years in the printing business, he gets by.

"It gives me enough money to survive and do my job — getting my poem out," he said.

The money he's made publishing the poem — about \$60,000 in eight years, he thinks — has all gone back into printing and shipping it to schools, synagogues and museums.

"I believe my poem has a positive effect on anyone who reads it, and hopefully will lessen the possibility for another Holocaust, which I feel may happen with other groups of people in the world," he said.

With that, Fischl went back to work. Another commuter train was pulling into the station, and it was his job to make sure the passengers getting on and off were safe.

A few people nodded at the security guard, but no one had the time to stop and talk. What a shame.

Fischl's poem is available from the archives of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and can be read on his Web site: www.Holocaust-trc.org/FischlPoem.htm.

Dennis McCarthy's column appears Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday.

A Living Legacy Remembers

By Denise Tyrrell

He was one of the hidden children of the Holocaust. As a child in Hungary, he escaped internment in a concentration camp by hiding in the cellar of a church with sixty other boys. His mother and sister survived by hiding in a convent. His father perished at the hands of the Nazis after managing to get out one last phone call to his son.

Despite—or perhaps because of—his experience, Peter Fischl did not wish to dwell in the past. In the '50s, during the Hungarian revolution, he escaped to the United States with his wife, Ilona and two-year-old son, Tibor. Besides his immediate family, Fischl liberated 32 other people when he escaped from Hungary. In the U.S. he eventually remarried, added his daughter, Catherine to his family tree and enjoyed a thirty-year career in the printing business.

It was not until the '60s that a chance encounter with a photograph in Life magazine brought the past to the present in one vivid image. A heart-wrenching picture of a little Polish boy with his hands over his head as Nazi soldiers pointed guns at him stunned Fischl. (The photo was taken by Nazi photographers for General Jurgen Stroop, a Nazi official, to document the uprising and final liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto.)

That photo and the little boy it featured haunted Peter Fischl. He talked to the little Polish boy, imagined him, and ultimately rose in the middle of the night

to write to him. The result was the poem, "To the Little Polish Boy Standing with His Arms Up." The poem captured on paper his sense of pain and kinship with the little Polish boy, who most certainly did not survive. "The Nazis were very afraid of the Jewish children," Fischl states. Torn by the idea that publication of his writing might exploit the memory of the little Polish boy,

Fischl placed the poem in a drawer, where it remained for twenty-five years.

Then came the movie *Schindler's List* in 1993, and finally the poem to the little Polish boy came out of the drawer. "I had a feeling it might be very good in schools," states Fischl. He believes that children can be put on a better path through education. "I feel I help this world, somewhat, by teaching about the Holocaust," Fischl says. "Because I am a survivor, I am a believable speaker."

By 1994 the poem was selling out at the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance bookstore in Los Angeles and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

To aid his education campaign, Fischl has also co-created a lesson plan with English teacher, Judy Leuhn Junecko entitled "To Be or Not to Be." The plan is available for free to teachers.

As part of his presentation, Fischl points to the picture of the little Polish boy and tells students, "There are dozens of Nazi organi-

zations active on the Internet who want to see you in that picture. What," Fischl asks, "will you do?" He urges students to be more sensitive to injustice and ethnic and religious bigotry, encouraging them to recognize that every ethnic slur has in it the seeds of the Holocaust.

Still, his war against ignorance is nothing compared to the war he waged for his own survival when he faced the same foe as the little Polish boy. He knows how close he came to being the boy in that picture. "I still see the little Polish boy. I still have conversations with

(Continued on back)



Since retiring from the printing business, Peter Fischl has worked as a security guard at the Downtown Burbank Metrolink Station.

To the Little Polish Boy Standing with His Arms Up

I would like to be an artist
so I could make a Painting of you
Little Polish Boy

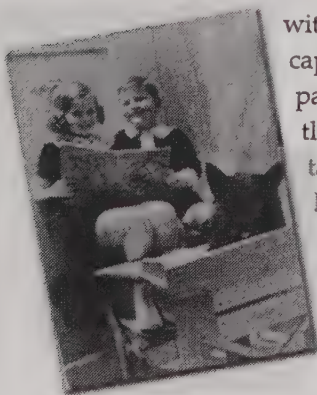
Standing with your Little hat
on your head
The Star of David
on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

I would make a monument of you
And the world who said nothing

I would like to be a composer
So I could write a concerto of you
Little Polish Boy

Standing with your Little hat
on your head
The Star of David
on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

(Continued on back)



him," says Fischl about the image that still haunts him. "Deep inside of me he is alive."

Currently Peter Fischl, is the grandfather of four, Zephan (18), Azell (17), Logan (9) and Christian (7). On top of his active speaking schedule, he is preparing his autobiography with co-writer Bud W. Yoho. The book is entitled *And the World Who Said Nothing* and will be available through Fischl's Web site within the next few months.

If you would like to learn more about his educational program or purchase materials, Peter Fischl may be reached by e-mail at peterfischl@mymailstation.com or log onto

www.Holocaust-trc.org/FischlPoem.htm.

Holocaust Remembrance Day is April 29, 2003.

"Your poem is deeply moving."

—A fax from Elie Wiesel, Professor,
Boston University, March 4, 1998



"The memorialization of the Holocaust is important, not only as a tribute to the victims of the world's greatest crime, but also as a warning to the dangers of bigotry which are yet to be overcome. Your work is a welcome contribution in the battle for memory in a more humane society."

—A letter from Aaron Breitbart,
Sr. Research Associate,
Simon Wiesenthal Center,
December 29, 1994

METROLINK

(Continued from front)

I would write a concerto of you
and the world who said nothing

I am not an artist
But my mind had painted
a painting of you

Ten Million Miles High is the Painting
so the whole universe can see you Now
Little Polish Boy

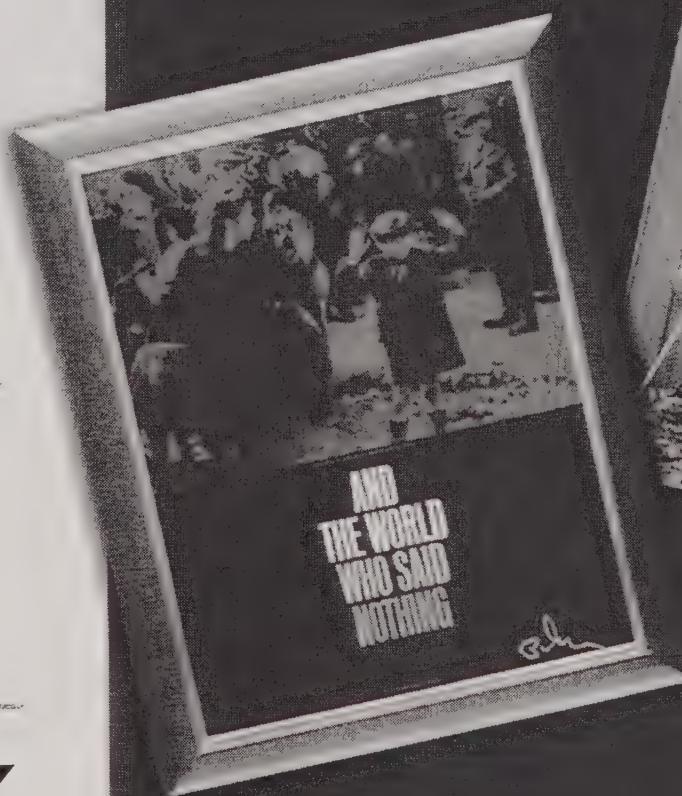
Standing with your Little hat
on your head
The Star of David
on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

And the World who said nothing

I'll make this painting so bright
that it will blind the eyes
of the world who saw nothing

Ten billion miles high will be the
monument
So the whole universe can remember
of you
Little Polish Boy

By Peter L. Fischl



Standing with your Little hat
on your head
The Star of David
on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

And the monument will tremble
so the blind world
Now
will know
What fear is in the darkness

The world
Who said nothing

I am not a composer
but I will write a composition
for five trillion trumpets
so it will blast the eardrums
of this world

The world's
Who heard nothing

I am
sorry
that
It was you
and
Not me



Poem from the archives of the
Simon Wiesenthal Center, Los
Angeles, CA 1994 Peter L. Fischl

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In closing, I feel blessed that “The Little Polish Boy Standing With His Arms Up” has helped so many people worldwide explore their capacity for empathy and love. To be sure, the greatest victory is how that one moment of supreme desolation, captured forever by Stroop’s photographers, and meant as a birthday gift for Hitler could be transformed into an instrument that continues to fight hatred, prejudice and injustice eternally.

*** * * * ***



**April 28, 1999, Augora Hills Hilton
Peter L. Fischl and Christoph Meili**

CHRISTOPH MEILI WHO DID NOT TURN HIS HEAD

Albert Speer was Adolph Hitler's second in command. In Speer's memoirs written at Nuremberg Prison where he served 20 years, he wrote that he went wrong in his life when he walked through Gestapo headquarters, saw blood flowing under one of the doors, and did not question anyone. The fear that he might lose his job and that bodily harm might be done to him and/or his family caused him not to question or act.

That is why Christoph Meili is my 'SUPERHERO.' He did not hesitate for one second when he saw wrong being done at the bank where he worked. He reported to the world what the Swiss bankers were doing—bank robbery in the form of shredding ledgers documenting property belonging to people who had become Holocaust victims.

Christoph had seen Steven Spielberg's movie, "Schindler's List," a few months before he discovered the ledgers being shredded. The movie inspired Christoph to act as it had inspired me to publish my poem.

You might be interested to know that my father's name had to be one of the names that was shredded since my family spent about one month in Lugano, Switzerland, in 1938. While there, my father deposited large amounts of money—over 250,000 U.S. dollars.

On April 28, 1999, I was asked to speak to the Conejo Jewish Academy at the Augora Hills Hyatt Hotel along with Federal Judge Bruce J. Einhorn. The Rabbi from the Jewish Academy asked me to greet Christoph Meili at this event. I presented my poem in two large poster sizes elegantly framed and handsigned to Christoph. The photograph of Christoph and myself was taken in the bar of the hotel.

This event was special to me since I was able to meet and present gifts to my Superhero, Christoph. It was also humbling. As I finished making my short speech and read my poem, the audience got up from their chairs and walked toward me to hug me as I was walking back to my seat.

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWER/AUTHOR

Bud W. Yoho is a Special Education teacher in Glendale, California. He has a Bachelors Degree in Liberal Studies and History from Cal State Los Angeles, and a Masters Degree in Human Development from Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena.

A “Consulting Teacher” for the Glendale Unified School District, he was recently awarded “Teacher of the Year” for College View School. An active member of the Glendale Teachers’ Association, he serves on the Executive Board of Directors and is one of the State Council Representatives to the California Teachers’ Association.

As a Cadre trainer for the California Teachers’ Association, he trains teachers as part of a High Risk Program on topics such as Gang Awareness, Teenage Suicide, Ethnic Minority Issues and Self-Esteem.

During their 30 plus years of friendship, Bud and Peter talked for hundreds of hours sharing their dreams, hopes and beliefs. Bud shares Peter’s commitment against prejudice and injustice and his commitment to human rights. Their conversations included some of the incredible stories that happened to Peter during his life.

Bud felt there would be a great loss if Peter’s stories would be buried forever, never to be heard. One night when they were walking on Brand Boulevard in Glendale, Bud suggested a book be written on Peter’s life experiences to which Peter joyfully agreed. This started the journey. Bud interviewed and recorded their conversations over a period of time. This book evolved based upon these recorded conversations which were typed, edited and revised several times with different collaborators. Ultimately, the book took form.

Like the “Five Million Trumpets” in Peter’s poem, we will not be silenced.

NEVER GIVE UP!

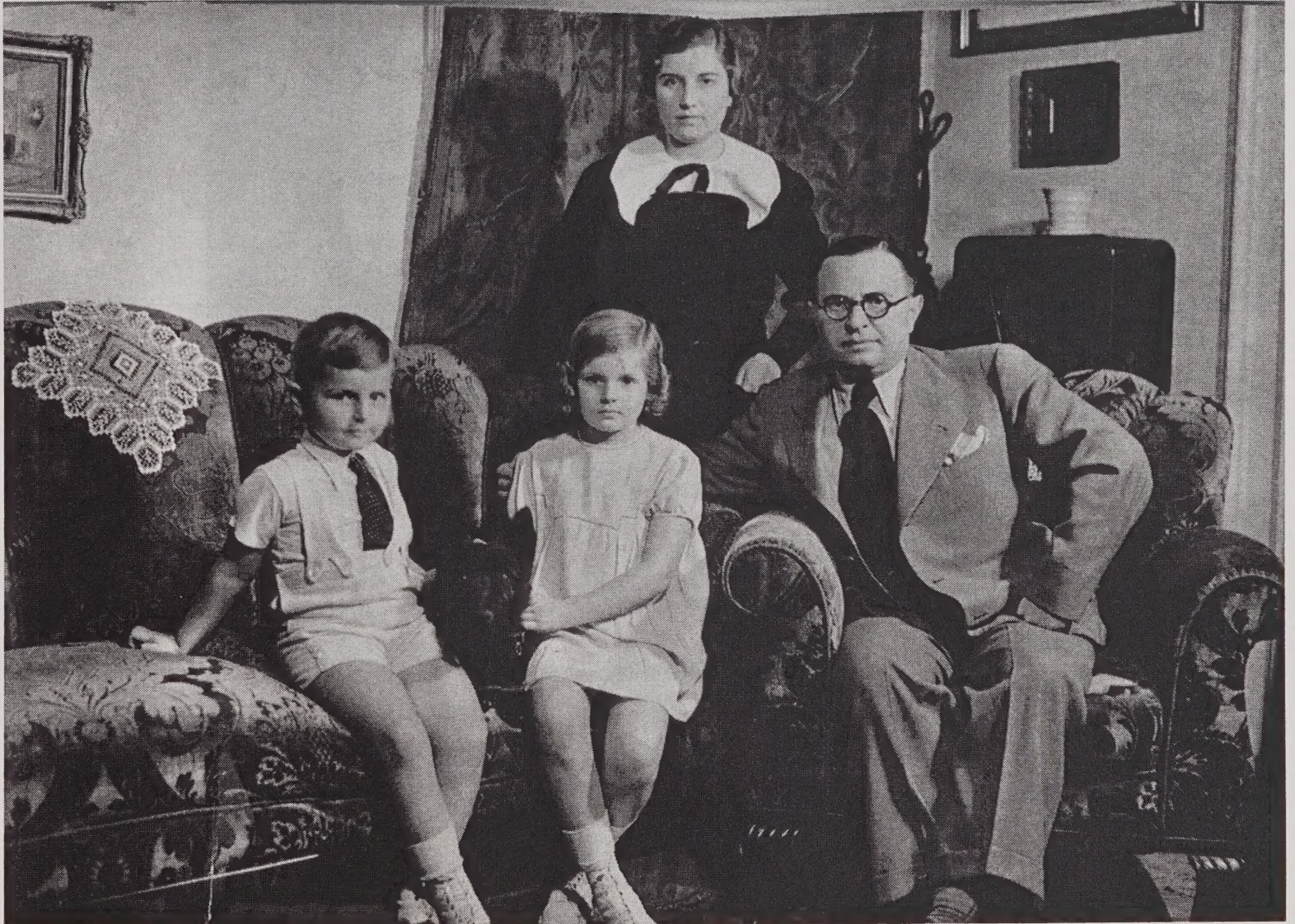
Special thanks to the following for their efforts in regard to Christoph Meili's findings:

ATTORNEY

**Duane C. Stroh
144 North Glendale Avenue, Suite 202
Glendale, California 91206
(818) 502-1912**

PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR

**Siedow & Associates
2629 Foothill Blvd., #262
La Crescenta, California 91214
(818) 242-0130**



Peter, Marika, Edith and Tibor Fischl

**The genius of Peter's poem is
that it takes a photograph meant
as a birthday gift for Hitler and
transforms it into an instrument
for teaching peace and
tolerance.**

Mark Uszler – Award Winning Writer



Roundup of Jews in the Warsaw ghetto (1943)

TO THE LITTLE POLISH BOY STANDING WITH HIS ARMS UP

By: Peter L. Fischl

I would like to be an artist
So I could make a Painting of you
Little Polish Boy

Standing with your Little hat
on your head
The Star of David
on your coat
Standing in the ghetto
with your arms up
as many Nazi machine guns
pointing at you

I would make a monument of you
and the world who said nothing

I would like to be a composer
so I could write a concerto of you
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The Star of David
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But my mind had painted
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I'll make this painting so bright
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of the world who saw nothing

Ten billion miles high will be the monument
so the whole universe can remember of you
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as many Nazi machine guns
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so the blind world
Now
will know
What fear is in the darkness

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I am not a composer
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for five trillion trumpets
so it will blast the ear drums
of this world

The world's
Who heard nothing

I
am
Sorry
that
It was you
and
Not me

Peter L. Fischl

P.O. Box 656, Burbank, CA 91503-0656



Peter Fischl hangs a poster with his poem about the Holocaust and the photo that inspired it at the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance.

"Although his father was killed by Nazis, it was a black and white photograph that forever changed Peter Fischl's life. Growing up in Budapest, Hungary during the Holocaust, Fischl spent his childhood in hiding. He was 14 when his father was killed. Today, the effect of the experience can be seen in Fischl's poetry about the Holocaust, which hangs in museums around the world."
— **GLENDAL NEWS-PRESS**, by **Britt Tunick**, Staff Writer, December 21, 1994

"I am so honored that seeing SCHINDLER'S LIST moved you to publish this powerful, soulful poem. Thank you for your kind thoughts, and for the signed poster. I'm having it immediately framed to hang in our foundation offices. Bust most of all, thank you for giving us the greatest gift: your testimony for our archive."
— **A letter from Mr. Steven Spielberg**, June 30, 1995

"Your poem is deeply moving."
— **A fax from Elie Wiesel**, Professor, Boston University, March 4, 1998

"The memorialization of the Holocaust is important, not only as a tribute to the victims of the world's greatest crime, but also as a warning to the dangers of bigotry which are yet to be overcome. Your work is a welcome contribution in the battle for memory in a more humane society."
— **A letter from Aaron Breitbart**, Senior Research Associate, Simon Wiesenthal Center, December 29, 1994

I'll prepare your wonderful materials tomorrow, for the Holocaust MA class at University College, London."
— **A letter from Sir Martin Gilbert**, Professor, Oxford University, February 26, 1997

"I've taught your poem in 4 classes and have presented it to a Holocaust Workshop of teachers at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg, NJ. Everyone responds very positively. I have developed a successful writing lesson based on the poem and plan to begin writing it up this summer."
— **A fax from Nancy Gorrell**, award-winning English teacher, Morristown High School, NJ, April 30, 1998. On May 2000 The English Journal published: "Teaching Empathy through Ecphrastic Poetry."

"On behalf of my students and I, I would like to thank you for coming to Garfield High School and sharing your moving testimonies. Please continue to spread the truth about the Holocaust and tear down the walls of ignorance."
— **A letter from Lori A. Barrell**, English teacher, Garfield High School, Los Angeles, California, September 15, 1997

"Our children in this community (and throughout the world because of your poem) are fortunate to be given such a wonderful gift. My best wishes to you. Your energy and commitment are an inspiration to me, personally. May the ears of all who listen to you be wide open."
— **A letter from Fred Fate**, Project Director, Upward Bound, Los Angeles City College, July 17, 1997

"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS I WANT TO HELP PEOPLE START TO THINK AND TO EDUCATE THEMSELVES AND TO LOVE EACH OTHER," FISCHL SAYS. "SO NO ONE EVER HAS TO GO THROUGH WHAT THAT LITTLE POLISH BOY WENT THROUGH AGAIN."
— **THE BURBANK LEADER**, by **June Casagrande**, February 11, 1998